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FLIGHT TO HELL



Hans Bertram



Flight to Hell

by
HANS BERTRAM

Translated from the German by
JAN NOBLE

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PART I

FROM THE RHINE TO THE TIMOR SEA

CHAPTER I

OFF!

INTENSE cold and a good deal of ice on the river made our start from the Rhine anything but easy. The motor took a very long time to warm up, and the motor-boat towing the *Atlantis* had to move with extreme caution for fear of encountering ice which might damage the floats of the plane.

The man at the microphone, stationed near us, was giving a running commentary to his listeners:

'Ladies and gentlemen! — Here we are on the banks of the Rhine, at the microphone of the West German Broadcasting Company. The scene before us is one of brisk activity. The seaplane *Atlantis* lies anchored to a raft. In a few minutes she will be starting on her world-flight. The final preparations are being made. It is very unfortunate that the weather is so cold. Now the plane is ready to start; the motor is being warmed up with hot water. I shall try to get Mr. Bertram to come to the microphone to say a few words before he leaves his home-country. Here he is. One minute, please, Mr. Bertram, here is the microphone. Just a word or two. Tell our listeners where you intend flying to, what the purpose of the trip is, and what your plans are.'

Heavens! Are they expecting a lecture? Where I intend flying to? The purpose of the trip? My plans? My plan is to get out of this as soon as possible. I cannot very well rest on the laurels I won yesterday,

flying from Kiel to Cologne. To-day I am starting in real earnest. I just wish that hot water would soon be here. But steady on! I'll try to look pleasant at the microphone, and get that over.

'... a very great pleasure to be afforded this opportunity of saying a few words before leaving home. You would like to know where we mean to fly to? Well, to-day, only as far as Lake Constance, Friedrichshafen. Thence over the Alps, then on to the Mediterranean, Syrian Desert, Persia, India, round Asia, and so on to Australia. At present I cannot say more. Time presses. I must see whether everything is O.K. with the engine. *Auf wiedersehen!* Wish me luck.'

At last, the hot water. Now, not a moment to be lost. Strong arms give a twist to the propeller. Off she goes.

So much for that. The motor is running with none too good a grace, but in another ten or fifteen minutes she'll have warmed up. Now, thank goodness, we can get off, but first I must leave the cockpit once more to say good-bye to my people who are waiting on the landing-stage.

'*Au revoir.*' 'God speed.' 'Take care of yourselves. I shall soon be back – in nine or ten months very likely.'

It would not have done for me to get sentimental, although I felt pretty wretched. I am very fond of my people, and hate saying good-bye to them. Was I going to be successful? Was I going to return safe and sound, and find them as I left them? ... Well, that's over. ... That motor not warmed up yet? Wish to goodness we were well away – every thought and feeling focused on what lies ahead, and no room for what we are leaving behind!

The running commentary at the microphone made itself heard again:

‘Attention! Attention! A motor-boat comes alongside the starboard floats of the plane, the ropes are cast off. A hearty “God speed” rises from all radio listeners to the crew of four men. The boat pushes off from the raft, gets into midstream and now, with engines at full pressure, is towing the plane across the Rhine to the opposite bank, cautiously feeling its way through the ice. The *Atlantis* is now at the Hohenzollern Bridge, heading into the wind. The towing-ropes are loosened. A moment’s pause, most likely for the final careful inspection of the instruments. Now the plane is off, riding more and more swiftly over the waters. It is now in the air, and circles over us one last time in formal leave-taking. It disappears behind Cologne Cathedral, heading for the Rhine Valley. To-day, the 29th February, 1932, Hans Bertram, with his comrades Lagorio, Klausmann and Thom, started for a flight round Asia to Australia, on the Junkers seaplane *Atlantis*. . . . Good-bye, everybody, the programme from the studio will follow in a few moments.’

In these words the announcer gave his listeners an account of our start which was more vivid than truthful. We were not flying at all, but flopping disconsolately on the Rhine. Two, three attempts at a start had proved fruitless. Nothing doing.

It was absolutely maddening. While the engine was warming up, and we were being towed along, the spray, falling on the body and wings of the plane, turned into an ice-crust as thick as one’s finger. It was a pretty enough picture, I grant you, the plane looked like a silver bird – only the bird was now too heavy to take wing.

‘Hullo, there! Motor-boat! Come alongside! Catch hold again! We must knock off the ice.’

The plane was towed into the Rielier Hafen – port of Riel, and brooms and choppers produced and set

to work on a job that would take hours to finish. Then another trunk or two were thrown out of the cabin; they would be sent by rail to Friedrichshafen. We simply had to get away from the Rhine and the risks of drifting ice.

At last it was time to make another attempt. Hot water again. The engine started briskly, and was soon warming up. There was a bit of manœuvring to get out of the narrow port into midstream, plane nose to the wind – and now full-speed ahead!

The speedometer showed, twenty, twenty-five, then thirty, thirty-five miles. Hurrah! We shall do it yet. One or two false starts, and we were up.

Off!

One last wheeling flight over friends and home, the flag signalling from the cabin-window, then straight on. We were now heading for the Rhine Valley, Lake Constance, the Alps, the Mediterranean, Asia.

It would be difficult to think of a lovelier way of leaving our German home-country than this flight through the Rhineland. Proud castles tell us of a great past, trim towns of a present with its share of good fortune, and the smoke from chimney-stacks surely points to an assured future. The sight of our country inspired us with new strength for the tasks ahead of us.

It was great to feel that we were actually off at last! Now for a discussion of my aims, purposes and plans, lest this flight be regarded merely as the outcome of a love of adventure instead of a serious expedition with great tasks to fulfil.

Propaganda – a word greatly used and greatly abused! In Germany we have not the money to pack the Leipzig Fair on to a ship and send it sailing out to all the ports of the world, in order to give proof of the excellence of German products to all the nations of the earth. So I intended to fly through the world



Leaving home, flying over Cologne Cathedral



Landing on Lake Lugano

with a sample of Germany's aircraft industry, my Junkers seaplane *Atlantis*, one of the best of its kind. Our plane was to give a general proof of the quality of German workmanship.

Naturally, on a trip like this, one would collect data likely to be of use to aviation in general. I should specialise in information concerning the great air-transport routes of the Far East. It would be the task of the camera-man on board to make a lasting record of the unforgettable loveliness encountered on our flight. Daily and almost hourly one would be flying over new lands, mountains, deserts or coasts. Like a panorama, the beauties and glories of the world would pass before one, but the eye might grow weary, and presently cease adequately to register what it beheld. The camera would do this work for us; it would perpetuate our great experience.

The engine was going like clock-work. The speed was eighty miles an hour. Cologne Cathedral disappeared in the distance, then Bonn lay beneath us, presently Coblenz and Bingen. In a formal gesture of farewell we circled round the Niederwald Monument, the testimony to Germany's unitedness and greatness. The country beneath us was very lovely.

I found it difficult to realise that we had actually started. The last few months had been a frantic rush. Preparations for an expedition are almost more arduous than the expedition itself. That reminds me of a talk I had with a friend of mine, himself the hero of a long-distance flight:

'Bertram, old chap,' he said, 'I certainly do not envy you the preparations, mark my words, at least fifty per cent of your task will be accomplished once you have fuelled your engine for the start.' He was not far wrong.

Obstacles of all kinds cropped up, but it is no good dwelling on them, for luckily I am gifted with a thick

skin, and after all: 'Difficulties are there to be overcome.'

So now the start was an accomplished fact. Everything had been worked out to the smallest detail; nothing could have been forgotten or left behind. The future would show whether fate had some unkind blow, perhaps a knock-out blow, in store for me.

CHAPTER II

ICE AND FOG

THE surface of Lake Constance was like a mirror. The water had the heavy appearance of liquid lead. Sky, distant mountains and lake, all were grey. And grey, if not worse, was our frame of mind. We had been held up for the last three days.

'Snowstorms in the Alps, summits enveloped in mist. Visibility 50 to 100 yards. A ridge of high pressure moving in a south-easterly direction from Ireland across Central Europe, holds out the prospect of better weather in a day or two.'

So ran the weather-report. On the second day, a 'partial depression' pushed its way over northern France towards the east, and completely upset the previous day's theory: 'weather conditions uncertain for some days.'

Whether 'high pressure' or 'partial depression', I cared not. My great desire was to fly over the Alps and study no more weather-reports from Ireland, France or anywhere else. It had been snowing in the mountains for days on end, and we could not make our way through. It was almost laughable, for in a two hours' flight we could have reached the southern boundary of the Alps, and left our troubles behind us. We should have arrived at the Mediterranean coast quite easily via the plain of the Po. Once we reached the sea, we could not be held up again by mist-enveloped mountains. If the weather did happen to

be bad there, we could cross the water, fly along the coast from bay to bay, and so dodge our way to the next port. Instead of which we were sitting in a good inn at Friedrichshafen. It was delightfully warm and comfortable in the bar-parlour, of course, and the beer and 'Schnitzel' – chips – were excellent, but we had not organised this trip for the purpose of sitting around somewhere or other on German soil, making fine speeches over our beer!

Almost every hour one of us went over to the Dornier Aeroplane Works, where our plane had taken refuge. Telephone messages were sent out in all directions, and our friends at Dornier's, from manager to mechanic, cross-examined as to their opinion of the weather.

'Aye, it's hard to say. We sometimes have a spell of this. Once the dirty weather lodges in the mountains it takes a strong wind and a good long time to blow the clouds out of the valleys.' This was a specimen of the replies we got, and it was hardly reassuring.

We were ready to start at a moment's notice. Three or four times a day our boxes were brought over from the hotel to the plane, only to be carried back again. The *Atlantis* herself was surely feeling the strain. We were continually fussing round her, giving one last overhaul to engine and flying-gear, and trying how the motor ran. But none of this was serious. We had been prepared for months, and now, after all this time, we wished to show that we meant business.

On the afternoon of the third day a telephone-call came through from Berlin: 'Why have you gone no farther? We want reports and photographs of Asia to send to the Press, not pictures of you bearing up bravely at the card-table in Friedrichshafen.'

This was the last straw. Complaints from headquarters are a serious matter. If there was the small-

est possibility of flying on the morrow, we should start, and get through somehow or other. Should there be nothing else for it, we would fly blind over the mountains.

Next morning the trunks were again dragged over from the hotel to the plane, and stowed away. There was no more unpacking this time. Quite as a matter of course, and as if we had had an ideal weather-report, we went to say good-bye to our hosts at the Dornier Works.

What our last report had said, as a matter of fact, was:

'The northern side of the Alps free of mist. Cloud altitude 7,500 feet. On the southern side and in Upper Italy, heavy snowstorms.' However, it was high time that we set out again, otherwise we might be sitting by fair Lake Constance for an indefinite period.

The plane would have to be as light as possible and carry only the barest necessities, so as to ascend rapidly and safely to the requisite height of 12,000 feet. If we were to fly blind through the clouds, we should have to take care not to come into close proximity to the summits. It would be no joke to run into a mountain-top, when flying at the rate of eighty miles an hour or so.

In order to lighten the plane, therefore, we sent Klausmann away by the St. Gothard express. He travelled like a distinguished tourist with six trunks and the complete photographic apparatus, and we were to meet him again at Lugano. We then fuelled for a three hours' flight. It is only a hop, skip and a jump from the Lake of Constance to the Lake of Lugano – an hour and a half in the air. We should have the Italian plain before us when we got there.

We started at eleven o'clock. A big loop over Lake Constance landed us 3,000 feet up. It was terribly

cold already, and we thought wistfully of the inn-parlour down below and of old Klausmann travelling so comfortably, and with no icicles on *his* scarf.

4,500, 6,000 feet. Away over the lake in the direction of the 'old Rhine'. A few days previously we had flown through the Rhine Valley, from Cologne to Lake Constance. This time we should trace the river back to its earliest youth, for its first beginnings were German, and in flying to its source, we should be showing our love of country.

7,500, 8,400 feet up – getting on! True, the clouds were still several hundred feet above us, but to right and left the summits were already disappearing in the grey mist. When we reached the height of 9,000 feet we did not notice the cold – it was too cold for that! In a minute or two we should have to fly blind. The instruments were given a last, careful inspection, and with the utmost precision a course was set for the Splügen Pass.

Although the Pass ahead of us was only 6,600 feet high, the steepest summits along the plane's path, and to right and left within a conceivably dangerous proximity, came to 9,600 feet. In flying blind, therefore, we should have to gain an altitude of 10,500 feet as rapidly as possible, in order to be at a safe distance from all the mountains.

'All clear! Full speed!' The engine must now do its utmost, nose up until the speedometer shows sixty-five miles. We catch glimpses of cloud, and for a second or two see the earth through a veil, then – blind flight.

There are not many pilots, I think, who enjoy flying blind. One has no great pleasure in obeying the instructions of instruments showing an artificial horizon. In our case, moreover, there was the disquieting thought that mountains of very considerable height had reared themselves on either side of us.

Ours was a seaplane, too, and ought to be flying over water, not jogging over dry land for too long at a time.

After fifteen minutes' flight we were 11,400 feet up. This was high enough, and if we held on our course for another ten minutes, we might then risk descending again out of the deadly cold. A stiff grog would be good – grog such as they drink in Hamburg, even in the warmest weather.

Very slowly the time passed, but at length we began cautiously to descend. When we were at a height of 9,000 feet I was almost startled by the harsh light. Suddenly, what appeared like a detached wall of mist surrounded us. We had dropped down through the clouds and were confronted by a glorious and indescribably beautiful sight: at a height of some 6,000 feet lay a wide, undulating sea of mist – we were flying between two layers of cloud. In the distance mountain-peaks emerged from this pale ocean below us, to disappear 3,000 feet higher in the upper cloud-bank. We were in a strange 'world above the world'.

But the most poetic fancies shrivel in the bitter cold, and I was not sorry, in another ten minutes, to turn the engine off and glide for a bit. The Alps were behind us, so I might venture to descend through the mist in the direction of the plain of northern Italy.

4,500, 3,000, 1,500 feet and still the atmospheric conditions were dirty. There could be no relaxing yet in the cautiousness of the descent, for the country below us was pretty hilly. The plane descended to 900 then 600 feet and then, at last, a scurrying black shadow under the left wing told of a wooded hill. We could see in front of us; but scarcely more than 150 to 300 feet. It was snowing. No 'sunny south'! No 'blue Italian skies'! I was bitterly disappointed.

But in any case we had succeeded in crossing the mountains in safety. It was an easy matter to locate the Lake of Lugano, and we were soon circling over

it, and making the plane fast to the buoy which was there in readiness for it. Three half-frozen figures clambered stiffly out of the plane.

There was no hot grog for us, unfortunately. They did not seem ever to have heard of it in those parts. But, for my own part, I was in luck's way, for some very good friends of mine were waiting to give me a warm greeting which compensated me for the blind flight over the Alps.

Once more we had ice, snow and fog on the way from Lugano to Venice. It was exasperating that our departure from Europe should have been so hard. We were flying through a heavy snowstorm at a height of some hundred feet above the Po-basin. It was a good thing that we had not to climb above any more mountains, but simply to follow the windings of the river to its mouth in the Adriatic. Then 'left turn' and Venice would be under us in a few minutes. I was looking forward eagerly to the city of gondolas, and especially to its famous beach, the 'sunny Lido' where, surely, snow would be quite an unknown spectacle.

The mist grew so dense that we could scarcely see the two river-banks. The many windings of the Po provided us with plenty of work. The distance by air from Lugano to Venice is about 140 miles, a matter of a mere two hours normally, but for two and a half hours we practised exhibition flights between these river-banks, bridges and ships becoming for us the material for obstacle or hurdle racing.

Then the river divided up into several arms. I remembered my geography lessons of long ago concerning the delta which the Po forms at its mouth, and I concluded that we must be near the coast; that we should be able to land in Venice within ten minutes, unless -

Yes, unless the motor misbehaved. But that was

what the motor did, whether from lack of fuel, water in the carburettor or some other reason, I did not know; but I did know, quite definitely, that we were obliged immediately to make a forced landing.

Two minutes later, drenched to the skin, we were sitting in a God-forsaken spot on one of the arms of the Po delta. It was snowing and extremely cold.

CHAPTER. III

ITALIAN HOSPITALITY

‘FOR my own part,’ said Klausmann, ‘it may rain or snow all night long, if it likes. Here we are at least dry.’

He was quite right. The small damage to the motor had quickly been discovered and repaired. The plane was anchored to the river-bank, and was gently swaying on the sluggish waters. Wet snow was dripping from body and wings. The outer world was grey and cheerless; we could see a bare fifty yards in front of us, so on the whole it was better to be sitting there than to be up in the air.

‘How would you like a game of cards – “skat” for instance? What! Neither of you play?’ That was bad. I had now discovered the first error in the organisation of the flight: that in collecting a crew I had not seen to it that there would always be a third man for ‘skat’.

‘Do be quiet for a moment! I believe there is someone shouting outside.’

‘Ei, ei, cose volete? Chi siete?’

There were people about, it seemed. From where I stood on the wing of the plane I saw a group of three men on the river-bank and through the fog I dimly made out the figures of several more.

‘Vengo da voi, il vostro passaporto? Dogana.’

I did not understand what he said, but there was one word that sounded like ‘passport’, so the men were

probably police. One of them wore the unmistakable cap of a customs-officer. He wanted to come on board, and at a sign from me followed me into the cabin. We did not understand a word of each other's language; but with our hands we carried on a lively conversation. Our visitor made himself at home with us; he was glad to accept a glass of cognac from the plane's medicine-chest. This is a medicine to be recommended 'for special cases'. After that he became more serious and insisted upon seeing our passports. Unfortunately he could not make much of the passports or our flying papers, for he read as little German as we did Italian. The situation obviously worried him: he felt the necessity to regularise it; but how could he introduce a harsh, official tone without damaging our friendly relations?

'Avete fame e sete? Spaghetti, vino?'

That sounded very well. Naturally we were not slow to grasp this invitation, and the good man was highly delighted to have found an amicable solution. With much gesticulation he proceeded to explain to us that we should have to move the plane a short distance up the river, to be nearer to the 'stazione della dogana' – customs-house. We understood the meaning of this move also: he was anxious to take us into custody. In other words, it was an arrest with an invitation to supper! However we made no objections, for the place of detention might well be more cheerful than the dismal hole in which we were sitting, with its window-curtains of mist!

The *Atlantis* was soon moved to the opposite river-bank and 100 yards higher up. We took the most necessary luggage with us, locked the cabin door and followed our new friend. The whole population of the village, four men, five women, twelve or fifteen children and dogs out of number, had assembled to bid us welcome.

'Buon giorno' – good day – our luggage was seized and carried for us. We marched in a triumphal procession to the customs-house. Our host's first duty, on entering the living-room, was to place a large bottle of wine on the table. It did not take us long to feel perfectly at home in the warm room. Our friend, two of his subordinates and the oldest inhabitant of the village made a jolly Round Table.

'Your health!' 'Evviva!' After half an hour speeches were being made in both languages. We were given instruction in the gentle art of eating macaroni, and our linguistic knowledge had in the meantime made such progress that I was able, after supper, to explain our forced landing, and to ask for the dispatch of a telegram to Rome. From Berlin the Air Club in Rome had been advised of our coming, and we were confident that the misunderstanding of our 'arrest' would speedily be cleared up. It was then our turn to receive an explanation: we were told that a foreign aeroplane, carrying on anti-Fascist propaganda, had some weeks previously been throwing leaflets down over Italy, since when there had been a tightening-up of regulations in regard to foreign aircraft. That was reasonable enough, and I could not but blame myself that I did not have with me a flying-permit made out in the language of the country. But naturally I had not anticipated that we should be forced to land, and in any case we were expected in Venice.

We could tell from the meaning looks and the lengthy discussions going on around us that the villagers were preparing some sort of celebration for that evening; what form it was to take, we had not the slightest idea. In the meantime we had been laying our mattresses on the floor of the customs-house parlour, and preparing to settle down for the night. We had arranged among ourselves to take turns in

doing sentry-duty by the *Atlantis*, relieving each other every two hours. We were on the point of lying down when the oldest inhabitant knocked at the door and came in. He was wearing his Sunday best, and looked most impressive as he signed to us to follow him.

Over the dark road and through the many puddles we stumbled to one of the four houses of the village. Inside the gateway we had to grope for the wall of the house in the darkness. A confused noise reached us, then a door was pushed open, and to our amazement we saw an 'assembly hall'.

That sounds exaggerated or absurd, does it? I suppose so in relation to a village of nine grown persons, and it was, of course, only a fair-sized room with two tables, some chairs and benches and a large fireplace, but it was our good fortune to spend a few enjoyable hours there. Going home, very late that night, I came to the conclusion that the people of the South, like those peasants, who were contented in poverty and privation, and could even hold small jollifications, were greatly to be envied by the colder and more phlegmatic Northerners.

We were heartily welcomed as we entered, and at once one of the younger men lifted down from the rafters a fresh flagon of wine, from which he filled several large jugs. A very ancient gramophone, with a still more ancient needle, croaked out the march *Valencia* in our honour. I had very often heard the tune before, but never until that evening did I fully appreciate the excellence of the melody. Uninterruptedly, that is to say, for three or four hours, the same record went on playing – it was the only one they possessed!

The grandmother of the village sat in the chimney-corner, and cleverly stoked the brightly blazing fire which had to do the twofold duty of warming and

lighting the festivities. Amidst a great deal of shouting and banter I went to ask the best-looking girl in the room for a dance. Everybody clapped hands to mark the time as I waltzed with the abashed signorina over the rough, clay floor. Then the men sat over their wine in solemn world-shattering discourse. It did not matter in the least whether one understood the language, whether, indeed, one knew the subject of the conversation, because a reason for drinking and toasting one's neighbour was always to be found.

On our return journey, strangely enough, the street appeared to have even more holes than it had had before. Nobody thought the worse of him when our host, in his Sunday best, subsided into one of the puddles. I lay not far from him, for naturally, after striking up such a friendship, we had been walking home arm-in-arm. It was unfortunately my turn to do sentry-go on the *Atlantis* by this time. I sat in the cockpit where I proposed to remain for the two hours specified – and I woke up in the same place, in broad daylight, stiff with cold and wet to the skin, under a veritable downpour of rain.

Luckily, the reply-telegram from Rome did not arrive before the afternoon, so we had got over the worst of our headaches before starting off for our official reception in Venice. On leaving Porto Fossone – that was the name of the famous village – we gratefully acknowledged the 'buona fortuna' 'good luck' so feelingly uttered by our new and good friends.

Venice, I had always understood, makes an ideal honeymoon city, and I had really intended seeing it myself for the first time in the company of my bride. However I had landed in the island city without a bride, but quite anxious, nevertheless, to be rowed over its water-ways, once at any rate.

'How would it be, if we asked a lady to accompany

you in the gondola,' asked Lagorio, 'I could make a film of you both.'

The proposal was not bad, and we prepared to carry it out; but, would you believe it? After four hours' vain pursuit we gave up the attempt! In all Venice no film-star was to be found, or else we were crass beginners in an art which demanded a highly experienced cavalier. In the end Lagorio and myself had to sit alone on the luxurious cushions of the water-taxi. Thus sadly was I cheated of my enjoyment of the Venetian moonlight, for despite Lagorio's manly beauty, I could not get up quite the correct mood!

All the same, I can heartily recommend such a trip. Even the Berlin taxi-drivers might learn something in the way of dexterity from those swarthy-haired gondoliers. It is amazing with what safety and even speed all manner of vehicles manœuvre a passage for themselves on the narrow lagoons: beer and coal barges, funeral processions, milk-floats or even express messengers.

'After the gondola-trip, go to St. Mark's Square, and be photographed feeding the pigeons.' That is what the guide-book tells us, and that is what happens. One of the things to do when visiting Venice is to feed the pigeons of St. Mark's; then one can send the familiar photograph home next day, inscribed with 'heartly greetings from the Sunny South'.

Before leaving Venice and lovely Italy, I spent many an hour trying to solve the problem of why macaroni is served like yards of twine. It certainly is difficult, when seated in the open air, to master the art of getting those gigantic strings into one's mouth, without smearing collar and tie or letting the floury pipes slither to the ground, to the serious danger of the passer-by. The result of my cogitations is a device which is, I believe, being published for the first time

in this book: let him who is unskilled in the eating of macaroni insert into his mouth the narrow end of a funnel; the rebellious strings may then be heaped into the bowl of the funnel. This piece of wisdom I have pleasure in presenting to a country of song and of great hospitality.



Landing at Castell Rosso



Alexandretta



CHAPTER IV

THE PIRATES' NEST – 'CASTELL ROSSO'

IT was no easy matter to make our way in through the narrow entrance. Fortunately there was no current to drive us sideways. In a zigzag course I brought the *Atlantis* through the rocky portals, and then there lay before us one of the loveliest sights I had ever seen.

'Castell Rosso' – Red Castle – is the name one reads on the sea-charts. But it figures only on large-scale charts; in the others it is lost in the innumerable Mediterranean islands which lie along the coast of Asia Minor. Remote from any shipping route and with no natural mineral wealth, the small seaport town on its rocky island is of no importance whatever to shipping and trade. It might, however, be made into a source of wealth by an enterprising travel-agency.

Two days before, the *Atlantis* had transported us from Venice to Athens via Brindisi. Neither the Acropolis nor the expensive hotels of the Greek city were able to tempt us to spend many days in the Hellenic capital.

'You ought to make an intermediate landing in "Castell Rosso". It is an excellent port for seaplanes as well as a most interesting place in itself. Have a look at it; it is on your route in any case.' That was the advice given us in Athens. It is just as well to take what you can get, if it is within easy reach, so

we decided to visit 'Castell Rosso'. The flight from Athens over the Aegian Archipelago was fascinating. Many centuries ago Ulysses roved down there in his little sailing-boat, adventuring with sirens and other water-witches, and lost for years at a time; and here were we in our seaplane covering the whole distance in a mere hour or two.

Presently our goal lay before us, and we were in the harbour gazing in astonishment at the sight which met our eyes. Was it real? Was it not a scene from a film, staged in the rocky valley of a Mediterranean island? No, it was natural enough; but we certainly had landed in a 'pirates' nest' and no mistake!

Holes had been bored in the bare, red walls of rock and houses stuck in them. Between these the streets descended almost perpendicularly to the harbour. The narrow strip of beach between rock and water was the main road, and went all the way round the circular valley. The gay sails of the fishing-boats in the harbour made an expressionist picture of the whole scene. We had arrived in a fantastic world, and our experiences during our stay there proved it.

Half an hour after landing we were at a reception in the Governor's house. Representatives of the best families were there. Speeches were made and we were bidden welcome and toasted in excellent champagne. With dignity and kindness our host prepared to show us the town, and we all set off together.

The tour of inspection reminded me of the Easter-day stroll in Goethe's *Faust*. The local great man strode proudly among his guests, his dignitaries following. Calmly and kindly he greeted his people to right and left; here showing his goodwill by a slight wave of his hand; there his displeasure by a dark glance at some contrite and deeply bowing citizen – probably one who was behind with his tax payments. I was unable to obtain any satisfactory reply to my

question as to how the people made a living. I was put off with diplomatic evasions, given to understand that the fishing trade was prosperous or that, perhaps, on some specially dark night they strayed on to the Turkish coast over the way, and did a bit of successful smuggling.

We were in luck's way that day: the town was celebrating a public holiday. About noon whole families made their way to the rocky plateau above the town. Making gay patches of colour, they squatted about in groups, played on the guitar, danced and sang wild songs. Wine flowed freely.

Suddenly the bells rang out from the church-tower, and on the instant empty bottles and plates were packed away. Instruments emitted a discordant final squeal; revellers assumed an air of tragedy. What could have happened? Had they all gone crazy suddenly? A minute or two before, they were shouting the wildest of drinking songs; now they were slinking down the road to the harbour, their arms dangling limply by their sides, their songs of joy turned into dismal hymns or prayers.

'You will now witness the most interesting sight that we have to offer our foreign visitors - a funeral.'

What could be specially interesting about a funeral? I was familiar with the rites of the most diverse peoples, had seen funerals in India and in China; but that a funeral procession in this little place would have any special features, I was inclined to doubt.

The afternoon was fairly far advanced when the procession of mourners set out over the harbour road. The priests came first, followed by eight bearers carrying the coffin on their shoulders. We were standing on a slight eminence and had an excellent view. We were somewhat surprised to note that the coffin had apparently not been closed, so that the body rolled back and forth as the bearers strode forward. That

was interesting, but not supremely so: I had seen the same thing before.

'Just wait. Come along with me. You will have a surprise,' said our host. We climbed through narrow lanes and up twisting stairs to the church above the town. In its small cemetery were the only bushes growing on the island.

'Look over there, by the church. They are already making preparations, and testing light and position.'

What could this mean? A photographer was there, busy with his apparatus. In front of the church door his assistants had constructed some scaffolding, like a hand-barrow placed sideways. One of them lay down on it. The photographer turned the camera on him. I could make nothing of it.

In the meantime the procession had approached, and halted just outside the church. The bearers stepped forward, put the coffin down, took the dead man out, and laid him on the scaffolding, in the position previously occupied by the photographer's assistant. The mourners grouped themselves in a semicircle, the weeping survivors next to the improvised bier.

'Look pleasant, please.' The group was photographed, as if the occasion had been a wedding or a christening. All the faces wore a grin, so as to come out as well as possible in the picture. Then they proceeded through the church door with the same mournful expressions and crocodile-tears as before, the enterprising photographer endeavouring in the meantime to sell us some of his best funeral groups of recent years.

Evening found us in the Company of a German who was settled in the place. With him we drank a glass of sour wine in the only saloon in the place. The impression of the afternoon's events was still very vivid in our minds. A couple of naphtha-flares scarcely

gave light enough for the players at the dice-tables. I was most anxious to know what the men at the various tables were talking about so excitedly — certainly it was not the fishing!

'The moon is on the wane, and the dark nights are coming. There is always a great stir on our island at such times and plenty of work.' More than that I could not get out of the German electrician who must himself have been driven by some strange wind on to that coast. 'You cannot get over this afternoon, I think?' he continued. 'I was just the same at first, but one gets used to anything, and we have even stranger customs, although they are not to be met with every day. You might like to hear about them.'

But first another flagon of wine, it was dry work talking in that foul atmosphere. Then the man began his recital. For the truth of his story I have only the assurance of a rolling stone, and possibly a court of law would not place very much credence in that, seeing that alcohol had been consumed pretty freely! For my own part, however, I believed every word of it. Here it is.

'Do you see those lads over there at the corner table, discussing some mysterious business so vehemently? Ever since childhood they have gone fishing with their parents, and possibly they may have been once or twice over on the Turkish coast where all sorts of things can be picked up cheap. Well, when those lads reach the age of twenty or twenty-one, they will disappear one day. Nobody will know where they are, but everybody will know what their disappearance means, and look forward with pleasure to the development of the drama — as a Spaniard looks forward to a bull-fight, and a German to his next game of skittles.

'In a few months the runaway will be back again, as suddenly as he had disappeared. He is just the

same, of course, and greets his friends, as if he had only just parted from them the night before; but there is a big change in his appearance. In the old days he used to go about in his fisherman's togs: trousers and sweater and perhaps sandals – now he wears a well-fitting suit of extremely gay pattern and shoes and stockings, and he takes every opportunity to sweep off his broad-brimmed hat, even to the most casual acquaintance. He has been abroad for some months, has had a job, and out of his earnings bought himself all these fine clothes. He wants to get married.'

Well, what of it, if he did! Why did our friend make such a fuss over a thing like that? It was natural enough that a young man should wish to marry some day, and that he should don his smartest apparel at such a time, was also perfectly natural. However the narrator took up his tale:

'I can understand that you feel a trifle disappointed, but wait until you have heard the rest. Did you see any young girls when you went round the town to-day? I expect not, for in this part of the world an unmarried woman must not leave her parents' house before her wedding; she must never go out on the street, and never be seen by a man. So the youth is in a quandary: he wants to get married, but he does not know how or to whom!

'At this point his family gets busy on his behalf. Heated family-councils are held, and the names of likely girls are brought up; care is taken to weed out all but the most suitable candidates. Then the man's family gets into touch with the girl's, and they haggle over the purchase-price. It's a fact! Women here pay for their husbands, they sometimes offer as much as 10,000 M. for them. The man brings to the marriage little besides his new suit, for any money that he may have earned has been squandered in this very tavern, at dice or in drink.

'And now comes the spectacle to which the town has been looking forward for weeks: at an appointed hour the young man marches up to the house of the damsel whom his family has chosen for him, and parades up and down in front of it. The girl appears in the doorway, and proceeds to sweep the steps before the house with a broom — her back to the road, mind you! Step by step she sweeps, and in a few minutes her task will be accomplished. Meanwhile her relations and friends are flattening their noses on the windows of the house, and on the road there are hundreds of spectators craning their necks — a good many of them have bets on. The whole place is in a ferment; only the two principals remain unmoved by the importance of the moment. She calmly continues to sweep the steps; he goes on marching up and down.

'Now the last step is clean. The girl slowly turns round, and for a second glances down the road. This is the decisive moment; the youth is seeing his bride elect for the first time, and in this one moment he has to settle a question affecting a lifetime. If he calmly marches on, as before, a sad and rejected maiden will retire into the house; but if he lifts his hat in greeting and approaches her, fate has decided, and the wedding will take place in a few days.'

'But what an amazing thing! Pity we could not have seen something like that.'

'Wait a bit, you have not heard the best of it yet. Our unwritten law says that the young man or his family have the right, during the early days of the marriage, to send the young wife home in disgrace. Of course there has to be a good reason for such a step; but, unfortunately I cannot discuss that, as you will doubtless be putting this story into your book. You may, however, record the most important fact: the man does not return the purchase-money.'

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For a long time that evening we sat in the cabin of the *Atlantis*, having had to quit the tavern at 9 o'clock. That was the regulation closing-time, and doubtless fixed after mature reflection. Young men will in this way be kept from dice and wine, and if people are to pay their taxes, they must do a bit of work. The boats set sail for the night fishing at 10 o'clock. On the evening in question it was very dark.

'This place really does make me feel a bit jumpy. It's exactly as one used to picture a pirates' nest, when one was a kid.'

'Oh, I don't know! The night sailings are not the worst feature of life here, seems to me. Now, that yarn about the girl sweeping the steps - I did not like that at all.'

'But there is always the possibility of returning the wife, if you had a good reason, and you with your sharp wits should be sure to find one.'

'Nonsense,' said Klausmann, 'it would be too dangerous a job for me.'

CHAPTER V

THE SAND-STORM

ALEXANDRETTA gave us our first taste of Asia's speciality: heat. Europe with its ice and fog was now safely behind, and the desert wind which blew into the harbour, turning the cabin of the *Atlantis* into a 'monkey-cage', to quote Thom, made us think almost with affection of the previous snows. We were expecting a visit from some French flying-officers, and were making feeble efforts to tidy up the cabin in their honour. Our conversation was reduced to remarks like:

'Heavens, what a heat! It's to be hoped our brains cannot melt!' and the retort: 'Don't worry, old chap, yours did long ago.' We recalled, with a trace of superiority, Berlin's 'few degrees' of heat, even on the hottest day, and we longed to see the effects of the desert-sun on some of the paunchy heroes of the skittle-alley.

Alexandretta, on the map, lies at the extreme north-easterly corner of the Mediterranean. It is a border-town in the truest sense of the word: politically, it is on the border between Turkey and French Syria; geographically it is on the border between the European Mediterranean and the Asiatic continent, and climatically – to stretch a point – it swings between the extremes of snow and frost, when the west wind blows, and there is a storm on the Mediterranean, and a blistering, hot desert-temperature, like to-day's, when the wind is in the east.

I was looking forward to the next day or two. It would be an interesting experience to fly for more than a thousand miles over the desert, and to see Syria and Iraq. Perhaps a very small geographical explanation may be helpful here: Of course you know something of Palestine, the country of the Bible? Well, if you start out from Jerusalem with a camel-caravan, and travel in an easterly direction for weeks and weeks, you will arrive one day, after suffering a good deal from heat and thirst, at the Euphrates. When you have safely crossed this muddy river and proceeded in the same direction for a few more days, you will come to the Tigris. Both rivers flow from the Highlands of Turkish Asia Minor many hundreds of miles across the desert to the Persian Gulf. But for their waters, life and any kind of settlement would be impossible. From Alexandretta to the Euphrates is only a little over sixty miles. You will now be able to follow my flying-route: Mediterranean coast, a hop over the strips of land to the Euphrates, then a flight across the desert, following the two rivers Euphrates and Tigris, to the Persian Gulf. The Persian coast is the coast of Asia, and there, at last, the flight 'round Asia' can begin. First of all, then, the thousand miles across the desert – I rejoiced at the thought of it – but one ought never to rejoice too soon.

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Starting difficulties again! The sea was absolutely still in the absence of wind, and the air oppressively heavy. We had made three attempts to start, and all three had failed, just as happened on the Rhine a week earlier; but with this small difference: it had been too cold to start then, and it was too hot to start now!

'I rather think you may look out for dirty weather in the desert, I know this wind,' was the opinion of a French flying-officer who came to visit us yesterday.

'Be careful if there is a sand-storm. The dust goes whirling up to a height of 12,000 feet: it will most certainly choke your carburettor, and you will have to descend on to the sand with your seaplane, and perhaps be several days without any drinking water, before we find you.' We promised to be very careful. A desert landing did not appeal to us.

At last we got away. Our trusty motor did not fail us, although the water in the cooler was almost at boiling-point. We headed for the desert at a height of 3,000 feet; it was much more bearable up there.

I knew the desert already; I had flown across it once before on the way to China with the seaplane *Freundschaft - Friendship* - but at that time it was not nearly so hot. The only picture left in my mind of that first desert-crossing is that of a dead mass of sand, brown or yellow, sand only, nothing but sand. Perhaps the general impression made upon me then was too new and too powerful to permit of my seeing any details at all; this time I intended to be more observant.

The Mediterranean coast lay behind us, disappearing in the haze of the coming day. Before us was the great solitude, the silent infinity of the desert. There was no trace of life or vegetation, only dead, scorched land. The sun had just risen above the horizon, showing up the myriads of grains of sand that came towards us in a glittering dance. We seemed to be flying into the jaws of a sparkling hell; the nightmare oppression grew. We longed to turn back, to see water and traces of life again, but the engine still ran on, carrying us farther and farther into the mysterious world of silence.

Gradually the eye accustomed itself to the crude colours, and was able to distinguish details. Ahead of us, to the right, appeared a dirty white spot - a

dried up salt lake. Streaks which appeared here and there on the sandy waste, going in all directions, were probably roads; but did anything alive ever travel over them? There! What was that? Lost in the endlessness, it moved at a snail's pace – a blue touring car. Solitude again. After an hour's flight the picture changed. There were traces of shrivelled vegetation, and here and there stone walls or tents – human habitations. How was it possible for any human being to live and be happy in that dead land?

Far ahead lay a valley. The green of some growing thing was a boon to our weary eyes. Then the veil of haze was rent, and in the green valley there appeared as if by magic, a large town: Aleppo. The buildings were reddish-brown like the desert itself, and even at that height one could almost feel the deadly heat which scorched every live thing down there.

At last! We had reached the Euphrates, and were following the course of the river, flowing sluggishly along with its extra burden of sand. Here and there on its banks one perceived green spots; these must have been watered by the river some time previously when it was in flood. Beyond the river again stretched the wide, interminable desert.

It was about 9 o'clock. We had already been flying for three hours over the sand. Our heads ached dully from the heat rising from the world below. We climbed up to 4,500 feet. The haze became more and more dense, as the sun rose higher. It was almost blind flight, the horizon merely a matter of speculation. I had now had more than enough of the desert solitude, and could not, for the life of me, understand my previous enthusiasm for this flight. Strangely enough, too, I seemed to have sand in my mouth – imagination probably – but was it? There was a grittiness in my mouth. What had happened to the

sun? First it wore a yellow crown, then its light became a dirty white, finally it was almost grey. The sand below also was behaving in the most unaccountable fashion, whirling and spinning in spirals. Then it grew dark; only a few feeble rays of sun pierced the grimy haze. Huge pillars of sand were rising out of the desert, here, there and everywhere; they were 3,000, 4,500, and even 6,000 feet high – higher than we were flying. The spirals advanced upon us from all sides, seeming to clutch at us with a myriad arms. It was pitch dark round about us. The sand-storm had come!

Great care was needed, for the danger was great. I had to turn the gas off, descend as soon as possible, and make for the river. At any moment the carburettor might be stopped up, and the engine cease running. For the last ten minutes we had seen no trace of the ground. Where was the river? Right? Left?

3,000, 1,500, 600, 300 feet up and still no sight of the ground. 150, 100 and we made out a grey smear below us – it was the ground – but still no trace of the river. Which direction now, right or left? On the correct decision depended the safety or otherwise of plane and crew. Best not think of that! The machine turned sharply to the right.

One, two minutes of acute anxiety went by, and then in the distance below us we saw a dark shadow scuttling along. It turned, it curved, it was the river – hurrah!

We did not descend straight away – the engine was still running – and we hoped that the river-bed might broaden further on.

‘Houses, land her here!’ Thom had been on the lookout, and bawled the words into my ear.

We descended a few feet further down between the raised river-banks, almost touching the water, but

there were mounds of sand everywhere and no good place on which to land.

Merciful heavens! I ascended with a jerk – having by a mere hair's breadth missed a bridge.

'Now, engine off!' The *Atlantis* rested on the Euphrates, between two mounds of sand. We had been forced to land on account of the sand-storm, but luckily we had all escaped with a whole skin.

This was a big slice of luck and no mistake! We came down close by the desert town of Deir-ez-zorr – almost crashing, it's true, into the only bridge over the Euphrates for hundreds of miles, and were sitting safely by the muddy waters of the river. The sand-storm continued to rage; for the moment we were indifferent to it.

The *Atlantis* was anchored to the bank. In no time crowds of people had gathered. Apparently the whole town had been aroused from its midday rest, when we came crashing down upon the river like the djinn of the storm. There were scenes of tremendous enthusiasm among those sons of the desert. I had no idea that people condemned to live among these stretches of sand could rejoice so whole-heartedly. The Arabs were most helpful, and rushed to bring us water. The ice-cold drink tasted delicious, and washed away the sand from our teeth and gums. Conversation was rather difficult at first, but gradually we began to understand one another tolerably well through the medium of the world-language of signs.

The storm raged uninterruptedly. We were just preparing to spend the night in the cabin, and thinking somewhat apprehensively of our close quarters, when there was a stir among the crowd on the river-bank, and three French officers stood before us – flying-men like ourselves.

It was a pleasant surprise. I had not known of a

French military flying-station in the vicinity of Deir-ez-zorr. We were given a hearty invitation to the casino, and gratefully accepted it. A few hundred yards along the river-bank stood a large Renault car, and we drove over most excellent roads to the flying-station.

There we found a few grey stone houses and barracks, looking as lifeless as the country round about. We entered a gateway, a door opened, a curtain was drawn aside, and we stood in a red upholstered *salon*, as good as any you could find in Paris itself. The officers – one commandant and seven officers, were stationed here – greeted us in smart, brilliant uniform which would not have been out of place on the boulevards.

The evening spent in the pleasant society of our French flying-comrades made us forget that we were sitting in the middle of an ocean of sand. But if one were to go out through the curtain and the door into the open air and walk about 100 yards, one would be lost in the terrible void of the endless desert.

CHAPTER VI

ADVENTURES IN BAGHDAD

‘**F**LY as high as ever you can, to be on the safe side. There is still a lot of sand in the air which might clog your carburettor. The sand-dust is so fine and light, you know, that only after some days does it settle like a shroud over the country – not to mention the fact that it may very likely blow through your hotel-window in Baghdad and come down on the dinner-table! – well, keep as high up as you can, and remember us to Baghdad.’

Such was the advice of the French flying-officers as we prepared to leave Deir-ez-zorr. The sand-storm had subsided during the night, but the air was still impregnated with fine dust. Up to a height of 6,000 feet. We rose to 6,500 feet above an undulating sea of sand-dust, and still saw the earth through a veil. It was delightfully cool – so cool, in fact, that we had to put on leather waistcoats and woollen scarves.

The desert assumed a more friendly aspect the farther south we went. After flying to within an hour’s journey of our destination – Baghdad – we came to the beginning of the great irrigation-works which made the Assyrian nation one of the mightiest in ancient history. Generations must have worked in the deadly glare of the sun at the artificial irrigation and fertilisation of the sterile soil, to get the few green leaves and fruits which meant their daily bread.

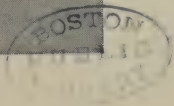
Deep, main channels have been dug from the river-



Baghdad



The water carrier



basin on both sides; further arteries form an immense network over the land, beginning broad and deep, then narrowing until in a delicate veining they terminate many hundreds of yards out in the desert. Only a few yards behind the last patch of water lie, undisturbed, the red masses of the sand. Thus are life and death next-door neighbours.

For two hours we followed the Euphrates, then the machine turned sharply away to the east and over to the Tigris. At this spot the two rivers of the desert are only twenty-five miles apart. After another twenty minutes' flight over the Tigris valley, we saw emerging from the haze a few scattered dwellings, presently the first pointed minarets and round cupolas of the public buildings, and finally, beneath us, Baghdad, the city of the caliphs, the city of romantic fancy. That day it was true that 'Princes from a far country come riding through the air on a magic carpet' – only I had had to attach a good Junkers motor to our carpet!

The contrast was very marked: on the one side the solitude of the desert – grey and red; and on the other the many houses of a densely-populated town and the soft green of the palm-gardens. But over the town and over the green as well there lay the ominous cloud of sand-dust which on the morrow would most certainly smear everything over with a coat of grey. We had to land under the last of the Tigris bridges. The engine was stopped, and in a wide spiral we descended.

4,500, 3,000, 2,100 feet high. What heat! A veritable inferno! We could scarcely breathe. My comrades flung off all but the most indispensable garments. I was still wearing the leather jacket and woollen scarf which I had put on for the high flight; but I had no time to take them off, and no time to think about them. The greatest care was necessary for the landing. 300 feet up the steamy heat all but choked

us. Then, very cautiously, we descended, the *Atlantis*, after a couple of hops, finally floating on the Tigris before the gates of Baghdad. Right in front of us a large herd of buffaloes was being driven into the water. I left the care of manœuvring us over to the river-bank to Thom; I was completely played out, and drenched in sweat.

The plane was anchored under the bridge, the most necessary luggage thrown out, and in a few minutes we were practically fleeing from the 'chicken-coop'. Now for a decent hotel, and a kingdom for a cold bath.

But what swarms of people were all around us! The whole population seemed to be trying to get cool in the river. They squatted up to the neck in the stinking water in which floated all the refuse of Baghdad, spreading a pestilential smell. Ugh! They were even scooping up the muddy brew in the hollow of their hands, and lapping it with obvious enjoyment; some were carrying home the river-water in brass jugs – no municipal water for them! Of course the Tigris is a sacred river, and what do a few germs here or there matter?

The steep declivity between the shore-road and the river was covered with mats and timber constructions. The Arabs, young and old, hung from the wooden planks like monkeys, and stared at us as if we had been wild beasts. The women-folk kept in the background and hid their faces from our sight, doubtless for fear of contamination. I could have found it in my heart to be sorry for those women in their long, black skirts which are certainly not the ideal dress for hot weather. The men all wear, as sole article of dress, a white shirt, that is to say, the shirts were white once upon a time, when we saw them they were, without exception, stiff with dirt.

In order to get up to the road we had to wade through smelly refuse deposited by the river or thrown

down from the street above, and in this filth in the shadow of sleeping-mats or planks, there were men lying asleep: men with scarcely any clothes on, as thin as skeletons, and their faces, arms, bodies and legs a mass of open sores – the beggar-guild! I was horrified, for those creatures who had almost lost the semblance of humanity, also hurled themselves from time to time into the water, and perhaps some yards away from them a fresh, young lad would be drinking the same lukewarm mess! We made off with all possible speed. At that sight we had already had more than enough of Baghdad. So that was the other side of the fantastic caliphs' palaces which we knew so well from the gorgeous tales of the city!

The drive through Baghdad was not an unmixed joy either. The wheels of our car sank into the melting asphalt of the roads. In front of us a water-cart was sprinkling the burning pavements; in a few seconds they were as dry as ever again. A traffic-policeman stood placidly at the cross-roads. I could imagine no torture worse than that job of his! However, he had not much traffic to regulate just then, as it was midday and everyone in Baghdad who was not bound to be out of doors was resting in a cool basement or reposing in a bath with a siphon of soda-water handy.

When at last the horrible drive came to an end, we rushed through the entrance-hall of the hotel, straight up to our rooms, tore off our limp garments, and let the shower play over our steaming bodies; although the water was in reality lukewarm, it seemed icily cold to us and infinitely refreshing. I had intended in this chapter, as its heading indicates, to describe some adventures to you; but I can truthfully state that that first bath in Baghdad was our greatest adventure.

Our programme for the afternoon was film-work. We could not remain in our baths indefinitely, worse luck! We had to do a little bit of work now and again.

At some future date, cinema-patrons, sitting in luxurious seats would be seeing our Baghdad pictures. I did not, of course, grudge them their pleasure, but if, at the same time, I could have blown a little of the heat of Baghdad into the cinema-hall, it would have afforded me the keenest delight!

It was only a few yards from the asphalted main road with its up-to-date buildings to the Old Town, but we seemed to have slipped back centuries. Quite a large section of the old town is overhung with drapery and mats, through which the sunlight penetrates only at rare intervals; there is a perpetual twilight in those twisty, narrow streets, the effect is strangely flat and monotonous. But what a hurly-burly! Our car could advance only at a snail's pace through the seething crowds, the driver uttering piercing yells. All occupations are carried on out-of-doors in the old town – beggars do a roaring trade. Here, for the first time in Asia, we heard the word 'Baksheesh' – a word current in every corner of the vast continent. There are open booths on either side of the streets, where you may buy everything that mouth, nose or eyes desire. Each vendor has the same wares for sale, and it is his aim to shout down and insult his competitor at the next booth. Presently, barring our path, were the benches of a tea-house. The guests got up, water-pipes in hand and with grunts of displeasure, while the proprietor made room for us to pass.

We had to film at that point. Luckily the mats over the street just there were somewhat tattered, and allowed the necessary light to get through. Action of the play: Thom and I stroll through the old town, make sundry purchases, sit down in the tea-house, chat with the Arabs there, and are robbed by one brown rascal who disappears in the crowd with our parcel – such was the filming of the *Thief of Baghdad*.

It was a sensation for the Arabs! They came round

us on all sides, jostling us, wanting to take part and expecting good tips. Lagorio and Klausmann did the winding, Thom and I were the film-stars, and I was stage-manager into the bargain. It would have been easier to train a herd of mules than the crowds of men in old Baghdad! However, it was done at last; after twenty attempts, the loss of my voice, and the loss of pints of sweat! For bear in mind that I was not master of the native language, and in my managerial capacity I made a most lavish use of gutturals! Then, 'Attention! Ready! Picture! Finished!'

Thom and I sauntered in front of the camera, bought dates, a few trinkets, and all manner of odds and ends to send home later. One bright specimen of a merchant offered us – of all things – a child's pram! It was the showpiece in his shop, and he was determined to have a prominent part in the film. That scene was likely to be cut out by the censor later on, but we had to get on with it. Everything went well. We took our seats in the tea-house, were given water-pipes and carried on a conversation with our hands. The 'thief' sneaked in – in perfect style too – grabbed the parcel and bolted out again. Shrieks and excitement ensued. The 'thief' had got away in the crowd.

Then the apparatus was packed up, tips distributed, and we waited for the reappearance of the 'thief'. He never came back, alas!

The next film was to be made by the well at the gates of the city. It was an interesting subject, and I was very keen. The fresh, cold water gurgled in the shadow of the date-palm, offering refreshment to man and beast. Women approached from the distance, carrying water-jugs on shoulders or heads with matchless grace; they were like figures out of the Old Testament.

A horseman came galloping up, white with dust. He looked as if he had been days or even weeks in the desert. Rider and horse were parched with thirst. Still at the gallop, the man dismounted, and led his noble steed to the well; the son of the desert gave his horse a drink before he knelt down to have one himself. That made a fine picture.

Something else approached. It looked like a cloud of dust at first; but gradually individual figures were distinguishable. They were wild and ragged and they shouted at the top of their voices. Behind came the main body of a returning caravan. Drivers and camels were all stiff with dirt and could be smelt afar off.

Lagorio was working with passionate enthusiasm, winding like mad, when at that moment, of all times, a motor must needs come roaring along with impatiently-hooting horn, and it tried to pass the caravan. Not even the stoical nerves of the camels were proof against this attack by a product of western civilisation. They kicked out wildly and made off at a trot down the slope, pursued by their yelling drivers.

By that time it was too late to do more work. The sun was almost touching the horizon, making magic pictures on the dust-cloud that still hung over the town. Dusk gave things an air of unreality. We drove round the town and a long way out into the desert. The road was frightful; in some places the wheels sank up to their axles in the sandy holes. The dust whirled up behind us, and remained suspended in the air like high walls. Outside the town there were caravan-camps. In the distance we could see the blaze of their fires, and smell the horrible odour that came from them – burning camel-dung, the fire-wood of the desert! Occasionally the foul air was rendered still more poisonous by the stench of

carriage ; dead donkeys or camels, left to lie, until the prowling dogs and crows should pounce upon them.

On our return-journey we saw something that struck us as rather droll. We had just passed the last of the sand-dunes, and come to the first poor houses, when a harsh glare suddenly pierced the gloom. It was the sky-sign of a cinema-palace on the edge of the desert!

For the night we sought a little coolness on the roof of our hotel. All Baghdad sleeps in the open, so the Abou family can see for itself whether Mr. and Mrs. Schallabi living next door change their bed-linen sufficiently often!

. . . After two days we set out once more before dawn; the town was still asleep. We rose in a zigzag course a few yards above the roofs of the houses, hoping that the Abous and the Schallabis would not catch cold when startled out of bed by our noisy departure.

CHAPTER VII

A DESERT LANDING, A FORD CAR AND A DISAPPOINTMENT

BAGHDAD was behind us. We had now to fly over the last 500 miles of desert, southwards towards the Persian Gulf. For this portion of the flight I set myself a special task, when making my preparations in Berlin, and I was still further convinced of the importance of my mission by the experts in Baghdad. For decades now, enterprising archaeologists have been working with pickaxe and shovel, excavating the sites of ancient civilisations. Names like Babylon and Ur once stood for great cities in a mighty kingdom. But even a powerful ruler like Nebuchadnezzar could not bid the stealthily advancing sand to stand still. The flying sand covers the town with a fine layer of dust; this layer grows thicker and thicker till at last the great buildings of a mighty king have utterly disappeared, buried in the red-grey sand – until the archaeologists come.

For these learned idealists I have an unbounded admiration. What patience and keenness they require for their task! With the utmost difficulty they collect the necessary capital, equip an expedition, go out to the desert and the heat, and discover some ancient ruin. There, with their helpers, they dig day after day, year after year, unearthing the remains of some old world. These heaps of stones may be of untold importance to scientists, and open the way to the

discovery of civilisations as old as time. I admire the perseverance of such men, and rejoice to think that I may be of some service to them with this flight. We shall fly at a low altitude over the different excavations, and take aerial photographs. A great deal can be seen from such photographs, the contours of buildings, roads or even towns may be recognised under the light sand from their darker shading.

If, on the flight from the Mediterranean to Baghdad, we ascended as high as possible to escape the heat, we now had to proceed over the desert at a height of about 300 to 600 feet, so as to be able to take the desired photographs. Should we fly any higher than this, the plate would merely show a grey veil, the eternal layer of haze over the world of sand.

The present flight was likely to prove rather difficult. At a height of 600 feet the visibility was not very good, especially when all around the prospect was a blurred grey.

How could one steer a course in the maze of sand-dunes, advancing out of infinity like the waves of the sea, and disappearing again in the dim distance? In Baghdad the experts gave us a sketch on which crosses were clearly painted to mark the site of excavations. Of course it is a very easy matter to find one's way on the map, but to find it over the country itself, with not a single landmark, was much more difficult, if not altogether impossible.

With the river as point of departure we set an exact course for a short flight into the desert – some thirty to thirty-five miles – keeping the sharpest lookout for anything in the nature of a landmark. Nothing to be seen; we turned back again, and set out from the river once more to examine a fresh tract, but again we drew a blank – and yet again! Then, quite suddenly, behind a great sand-dune, we descried a few heaps of stones, perhaps it was a wall. Heavens! And it was

in order to photograph this that we were allowing our eyes to be seared by the fierce red glare!

Now forward again; we were determined to find Babylon and also Warka, the most recent and best known excavation. The eyes of our learned friends in Baghdad positively sparkled with enthusiasm as they told us about this marvellous excavation:

'Be sure to find Warka, take your photographs, and fly over to the Euphrates. It is about fifteen miles, and land on the river at El-Khidr. We shall send a wire there and arrange for the motor-car to be prepared for you. Then drive to the excavations, and you will see a truly inspiring sight.'

When we found Warka, therefore, we should have the compensation of an interesting expedition into the desert – virtue was about to be rewarded.

Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar's capital, was easy to find: it lies on the eastern shore of the Euphrates. What does one see there? Three large mounds of rubbish, with passages cut through them in all directions. It is not very much – at least in my opinion.

Two lines cut the plain below us from north to south, two railway-lines – the Baghdad railway. I could not get up any desire to travel by it. The train crept like a snail over the wide, monotonous plain. Presently we saw two houses – huts rather – a desert railway-station. Farther away was a small mosque in a tiny oasis with some stunted palms; the place had the effect of a strip of green carpet.

We had been flying for three hours; the sun was already high in the heavens, and the air burning. Poor motor! The thermometer showed 80°, 85°, almost 90°. I was allowing only sufficient gas to keep the plane in the air, the engine making the minimum of revolutions; we almost grazed the sand-dunes. It would be cooler if we could have flown

3,000 feet up, but we did not dare be any higher because of the pictures. Moreover, it was impossible to get up to that height now. For such a climb the motor would have to be running on 'full gas'; but if the supply were increased ever so little, the thermometer would rise to 90° , probably over. At 95° the extreme limit would be reached. In a moment the water would boil, and the temperature leap up to 100° ; then it would be only a matter of seconds before the motor came to a full stop, the pistons done for!

It is not a bad nerve-test to observe the scale of a thermometer. The red stroke in front of us has only to rise another millimetre or two, and the mischief is done. Should we give up the search? Where could Warka be? We should not continue to look for it much longer. Was that a lake in the distance? It was: the large salt lake which is marked on the map near the excavations. We distinctly saw the ruffled surface of the water, we were at it – and flying over sand, yellow sand! And yet we all four clearly saw it – a mirage.

The air quivered, the light hurt our screwed-up eyes; but still we went on seeking, and still it was in vain. The motor was now running hard, the temperature of the cooler-water stood at 95° . I turned off some gas. The altitude was a mere 150 feet or less. It was more than time we went back to the river. We had to fly another fifteen minutes to cover the distance of twenty-five miles.

Something curious under us! A long, dark line wriggling along between the dunes: a caravan. Before I realised what was happening we were flying a very few feet above the animals. The confusion was indescribable! The camels went charging off full tilt in all directions. I was sorry for their drivers who, with furious curses, were taking aim at us. I should

not have fancied a forced landing there, the treatment would have been the reverse of tender!

Another ten minutes to the river. We had done it. There, two or three dark spots, heaps of stones and walls – that must be Warka, hurrah! Our luck was in. We made a big loop, took the photographs, and our task was finished. A few minutes later the *Atlantis* was floating on the Euphrates, near the desert railway-station of El Khidr.

They were expecting us at El Khidr. The station-master had been advised by telegram, and he greeted us in his capacity of mayor of the place. There were four or five houses with perhaps twenty grown-up persons and 100 children. Our plane was the sensation of the century for the extremely dirty Arabs. It would be nice to know something of the housing and mode of living of the desert-dwellers, but unfortunately we had very little time to question them, we wanted to drive with all possible speed to Warka in our new mode of conveyance – the motor-car ordered for us from Baghdad. We intended to continue our flight that same afternoon.

There it stood before us, the pride of El Khidr: an ancient Ford! Such a vehicle you have never seen, even in the maddest, American, comic film. However the engine was running – rattling like a tin drum full of stones – but still running. It was, you see, a Ford.

Then the ride began, and a real ‘joy-ride’ it was! Needless to say, the car possessed neither cushions nor pneumatic tyres, and the road had holes innumerable: big, little, deep and shallow. The driver squatted proudly on his seat, and when the jolts were more violent than usual, clung to the steering-wheel for dear life. As for his passengers, they were constantly being thrown into each other’s arms; they attempted

to balance the heavy film-apparatus over their heads, and they were in mortal fear for themselves and for their precious camera. How far was it? Twelve miles of road and after that six miles of desert.

A water-bag which accompanied us was soon emptied; in dust, heat and thirst our journey went on. Only the thought of our reward at the end kept us going – that ‘inspiration’ of which our Baghdad friends told us – surely it could not fail us! Spare me the description of the desert-journey that followed after the road was left behind. The driver, anxious to impress us with his skill, drove the poor old Ford at a pace hitherto undreamt of by that ancient steed. Panting and blowing like a hippopotamus it clattered up a hill, stopped at a clay hut – we had arrived at Warka!

Two Arabs came to meet us: the custodians of the excavations. No work had been going on for months – shortage of money apparently. I was by this time really excited about what we were going to see, and what it was that those two stout lads had to guard. We clambered up 150 to 180 feet of hillside, and then stood before a few crumbled walls and untidy masses of stones. Yes indeed! this was none other than the site of the excavations, the goal of our hazardous desert-flight and more hazardous motor-ride.

I must say I was terribly disappointed. The archaeologists will, I hope, not take it amiss when I say that I have not an atom of comprehension for their work. All the more may they be assured of my boundless respect, for, goodness knows, there are many jobs more attractive than to go crawling about for years in the sand and dust!

We went back to the river. Holes in the road and a Ford car panting its last did not matter: we had to get back to our plane. I had had more than enough of desert-flights and excavations, and was longing to

see something green. Were there such things left in the world as cold water and shadows, we wondered.

A few hours later we were in the air again, and following the Euphrates the last 180 miles to its mouth in the Persian Gulf. In my last hour's flight over the desert I saw a picture the frightfulness of which filled me with unmitigated disgust for the dead land. Before us as we flew was a heavy rain-cloud, about 4,500 feet up. The rain was coming down; we clearly saw the dark streaks of the falling water. It would be a boon for man, beast and earth – so we imagined. But at a height of 1,500 feet there was a second cloud, and into this second cloud the rain was disappearing – coming no farther down towards the earth. At first I could not understand what was happening, then suddenly it dawned upon me: it was merely raining from cloud to cloud. The country was panting for water, then after months the rain came at last – and evaporated a few hundred feet above the ground in the pitiless heat. The yellow sand remained ruler in this lifeless world.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE TRACK OF THE 'FRIENDSHIP'

'TODAY there is to be something special, a surprise for you; as a reward for the strenuous desert-flight, you are to get a "Persian Pilsener" – grand stuff!'

'It has no charms for me. I made its acquaintance before. I fell into that trap when we were here in Bushire with the old *Friendship*.'

Quite right, Klausmann knew the brew from his last visit to the Persian Gulf. What a pity I could not surprise my comrades again with this best of all beers! It tastes of rotten olives or dish-water. What exactly happened that time? After landing with the *Friendship* in the Persian harbour of Bushire, we ordered provisions to be sent in to us from the town: food and drink and, as a special treat, three bottles of Persian beer. We fell upon the bottles like wild beasts, took a good gulp, and spat it out again in disgust. Or, more truthfully, Klausmann and I spat it out, while the third colleague, the Bavarian Captain a.d. Rudolf Schonger, went on calmly drinking. 'It's better than nothing,' said he, and he drank the three bottles of beer in no time. What's more, he was alive and in perfect health next day, much to our surprise!

Klausmann and myself were sitting on the wing of the plane indulging in a few reminiscences. 'Do you remember how we went thundering ahead that time on our first flight with the seaplane, doing 7,500

miles in ten flying-days? That was some achievement! And then, the frightful end, like a bolt from the blue. Do you ever think about it all now?’

Did I ever think about it? Only half a year had gone by since then, after all. Six months ago, along the same route as this time, we flew the D 2151, Junkers seaplane *Friendship* round Asia with destination China. In twelve days Berlin, Constantinople, Baghdad, Bushire, Karachi, Bombay, Colombo. On the thirteenth day, in a monsoon over the Bay of Bengal, we had to descend into the wild sea, and the plane sank in a few minutes. At the last moment the crew were rescued by an English steamer, and like shipwrecked mariners returned home. Now, six months later, the *Atlantis* was flying on the track of the *Friendship*. It was a flight of remembrance. This was how it all came about: –

A short introductory history: when I was formerly engaged as adviser in the Chinese naval air-base of Amoy, I was not slow in realising that the first point in China's great programme of development is bound to be the opening-up of her remoter districts by means of transport communications. Without transport facilities there can be no industrial and commercial development. How are the huge tracts of land to be bridged over, by railway, motor-car or aeroplane? The Chinese hinterland is wild, riven by mountains or marshy with wet rice-fields. The laying of rail- or motor-roads costs too much both in time and money. The aeroplane bridges over difficulties of the soil in the truest sense of the word – by flight. In the Far East there is a market for the products of the aviation industry. We must cultivate the best propaganda to be successful in the ‘Celestial Empire’.

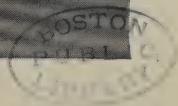
My idea was this: to take a German plane to China by the most difficult way, thus giving a practical de-



Air photograph of Warka excavations



Air photograph of Babylon



monstration of the excellence of German products. On the 12th September, 1931, I started from Berlin with the Junkers seaplane D 2151 for a flight round Asia. Crew: Bertram, Schonger, Klausmann. In accompanying us, Captain a.d. Rudolf Schonger, my old flying-instructor in Germany, placed his knowledge of aviation, his organising ability and his own powers of persuasion fully and entirely at the service of the business. The aircraftman Klausmann, who was likewise taking part in the present flight, had valuable foreign experience, both in Persia and in Afghanistan with Amanullah. In honour of China the plane bore the name *Friendship* in German and Chinese lettering.

The very first day of that flight was interesting, only terribly wet, with fog, violent downpours of rain and hail. The trip was from Berlin to Vienna; start, 5.30 a.m. After an hour and a half, heavy cloud-banks ahead of us, and below us the mountains of Czechoslovakia over which we had to fly blind. There was nothing unusual in this, but what followed was really funny.

We were flying at a height of 4,200 feet through a layer of cloud. I was steering by the instruments, not daring to take my eyes off them for an instant so that, of course, I did not see what was going on around me. Schonger sat beside me at the second control, checking the course, and from time to time glancing outside. He also saw only the grey masses of cloud. After half an hour's blind flight he noticed that the grey above us was dividing almost imperceptibly, and next he discerned a fine line of demarcation between two layers of cloud. This dividing line was exactly on a level with us, and so gave us the most excellent horizon. Naturally I saw nothing of this, I was still staring fixedly at my instruments. Schonger called something to me, bawled into my ear. I heard nothing,

and continued driving the machine into the clouds – and thirty feet above us there was the finest visibility imaginable!

Schonger at my side was carrying on like a lunatic, and making the strangest signs to me. He wanted the machine up out of the clouds. I heard and saw nothing, and still kept the nose of the motor in the fog-banks, for I had to obey my instruments. Schonger wrenched at the control, I kept on pressing, resisting with all my might, and quite convinced that my comrade had lost his reason.

Thus we went forward for a time, the one pitting his strength against the other: he striving to get the plane out of the clouds, I to keep it in. Finally it was too much for Schonger. With the flat of his hand he landed me one on the head that made me blind and deaf. 'Now he's gone mad,' I thought with terror, and threw a frightened glance upwards – to see a blue sky!

So our flight that time began with a free fight. In spite of that – or perhaps because of it – we were the best friends imaginable. However, on the afternoon of that same day, something happened which I can never forgive my friend, for it was too painful.

On the afternoon in question we were flying in extremely bad weather from Vienna to Belgrade. Through heavy thunder-showers we made what headway we could, flying over the Danube at a very low altitude. One downpour succeeded another; the lightning played continuously in the sky, and the clouds were almost touching the branches of the trees on the river-banks. Each of us could make out only the river-bank on his own side. If the river curved to the right, Schonger flew the bend; if it curved to the left, I took over the steering. A dig in the ribs was the sign agreed upon between us.

We had already flown through three thunder-storms.

The clouds were becoming a trifle less lowering; presently the worst would be over. There came another curve to the left – I should have to steer. Then I got a dig in the ribs, although the river was curving to the left, and Schonger had no right to prod me. 'Swine,' I thought, and just at that moment something banged me so hard on the nose that I saw stars. It was a hail-stone as thick as my finger, and I bore the mark of it for days. Schonger treated the matter as a huge joke; he had seen the storm approaching early enough to take refuge behind the windscreen, and his dig in the ribs was meant as a warning to me, but how did he expect me to know that, seeing it was the signal agreed upon between us? He might have hit me on the head, as he had done in the morning, but no! However, he refused to show the least compunction.

Schonger once gave me some well-meant advice for the nights: 'You might try hanging your hammock under the body of the plane. You would have the best fresh air, and I should have more room in the cabin.' The proposal did not sound too bad. Our *Friendship* had a smaller cabin than the *Atlantis*. We could not sling hammocks in the narrow space. The bed question was an ever-recurring problem. Klausmann crept into the tiny luggage-hold – thankful if in the morning he found himself fairly intact, Schonger and I always tossed up for which of us should sleep on the cushion of the bench by the cabin's back wall. Not that it was particularly comfortable there. One had either to curl up like an 'S' or else hang one's legs out of the window. The third man lay on the cabin-floor, between the bench at the back and the two front seats. In the morning our most difficult task was to bring our bodies back to their proper shape, and to smooth out the dislocations of the night.

So I was to try fastening the hammock I had brought

with me under the body of the plane. I should have to be careful, however, for when I did manage to climb into my hammock I found that part of me was suspended within a hand-breadth of the water, and I should have an involuntary bath if the wind blew or there was the slightest movement of the sea. At all events the hammock was a much better bed than I would have had in the cabin, and in recognition of that fact I donned my most elegant sleeping-suit – the one I kept for consulate visits during the flight! I went to sleep in excellent fettle – and woke next morning decidedly less so: my posterior was bathing in the morning mist over the water, and the whole front of my elegant sleeping-suit was swimming in oil: the motor had been given a wash-down with petroleum and oil the night before, and while I was sleeping this lovely mixture had been dripping down upon me. You can imagine the laughter of my companions!

It was like that! Three men started off on a flight, full of confidence and enterprise, believing in their luck, and thinking that the world belonged to them. Their plane was good, their knowledge adequate to the task in hand. What could go wrong? They were sure of themselves and intended to master their fate – and on the thirteenth flying-day they flew to their destruction, and lost their faithful *Friendship* in the insatiable sea.

Klausmann and I sat for hours on the wing, and thought about the past, and wondered about the future. In a couple of days we should be flying over the grave of the *Friendship*, on the coast of India, thinking of good comrades: Captain Schonger was unable to come with us this time, for he was ill at home, and our good plane could give us nothing more than the memory of happy and sad hours.

'How will it be this time?' 'Will Fate crush us again?' These were the questions which, fortunately, we could not answer. We wanted to fly into the future we two – a great and bright future – and we did not know that we were flying into Hell!

CHAPTER IX

A MOON LANDSCAPE AND A GRUESOME STORY

‘GOOD-BYE, and many thanks for the chickens; we enjoyed them very much this morning.’

We were glad, all the same, to be in the air once more, and to have snapped our fingers at red tape. Nevertheless this unexpected little interlude was diverting, as unrehearsed events often are. You shall hear about it:

The flight along the coast of Persia was really interesting. For ten hours one felt as if one were flying in a province of the moon. It is true, I do not know the moon, I have not been there yet, of course; but one has an idea of the sort of picture the moon would present to the first visitor who landed on her from a rocket, and I maintain that the Persian coast has the quality of a landscape in the moon, if it is not even more wild and desolate. It is difficult to find the right words and colours to describe what we saw. Perhaps you may form some idea of it when I say that the country looks like a great dried-up clay pit. The mountains push their way straight out of the plain with no gradual incline, and their steeply rising, rocky walls tower to several thousand feet, on the other side dropping sheer into the sea. Here and there a needle-sharp peak rises rigidly into the air; one thinks of a gigantic, primeval forest which has been smitten by fire, and then petrified. The mountains are of almost all colours: red, grey, yellow, black;

but one colour is entirely absent – green. Quite sporadically and as if forgotten by the brand of destruction, one catches sight of a sign of vegetation – but only a sign.

After a ten-hour flight along the Persian coast we were a trifle stupefied, and made the mistake of landing at a place where we were not expected, and for which we had no landing-licence: the Persian port of Guatar. In arranging for fuelling for the route, we had prepared everything for Guadar, a port in India, and due notice of our arrival had been sent there. There is only the difference of a letter in the two names, and only the distance of thirty miles between the two places. All the same our mistake – which, as it turned out, ended in nothing worse than a couple of roast chickens – might have had very awkward consequences.

The landing occurred at dusk, on a shallow part of the river, about 100 yards from Guatar. Crowds flocked to the river-bank and stared at us. We stared at them. They seemed to be waiting for us, and we decided to wait for them. We were in no particular hurry: the petrol-agent was sure to come along some time, so we settled down as comfortably as we could.

Two hours passed, three hours passed, and darkness had fallen, but still no sign of the man with the petrol. Meanwhile the people of the place seemed to be in a state of great excitement. We saw them moving about with what looked like stable-lanterns.

At last a boat put off from the shore; there were three men in it. Could it be the police? It was. The great man of the village came aboard our plane, and two officials remained in the boat with rifles at hand in case of need.

After a long and difficult palaver, we found out that there was neither petrol nor fresh water to be had there, that we had made a false landing, should have to

be arrested, and could not hope to see the matter settled in less than eight or ten days. In the meantime we must hand over our passports, and a wire would be sent to Teheran. The serious side of all this nonsense was emphasised by the presence of the two menacing rifles – it was an awkward situation; we could not use force against the rifles – and besides, the Persian government had always been most friendly to us. The officials had their regulations, and dared not make decisions on their own responsibility, for in Persia also there is such a thing as red tape.

I talked at great length about Teheran, government planes, diplomatic difficulties and all the rest of it. The good souls became terribly nervous, they were not in the least anxious to expose themselves to unpleasantness, and would be thankful if we could find a way out. I found it. I gave a declaration in writing. We might win the paper-war by means of a scrap of paper, even if all that was inscribed on that scrap was:

‘To all who may read these lines we send our best greetings. – The Crew of the D 1925.’

With signature and stamp, this document made a most official impression. The functionaries had no idea what it was that I had written in German. However, they were quite satisfied, and as pleased as ourselves to be well out of an unpleasant situation.

In recognition of the amicable settlement of this difficult matter I ‘decorated’ the spokesman with a Junkers pin of which he was very proud. In his joy he promised to send us a pair of roast chickens and some dozens of eggs from his kitchen – an offer which we joyfully accepted.

Many hours passed, and long after midnight, when we had given up all hope of our chickens, we were

aroused by the sound of voices: our good friends had not forgotten us, and most succulent the chickens were!

Sensitive readers should skip the next few pages. They contain the story of an unusually gruesome adventure that befell us.

Karachi – the first landing in an Indian port. We had promised ourselves a free day here which we would spend in motoring round the town. Our host held out the prospect of interesting things: sacred crocodiles, the tomb of a holy fakir, and a visit to a leper village.

As for the sacred crocodiles, they looked no different from those in the Berlin Zoo.

The tomb of the holy fakir was a stone hall under a bunch of palms. We were not allowed to enter until we had removed our shoes and stockings. Once inside we saw very little of interest, only the few possessions of the dead man. Decidedly disappointed, we proceeded to the leper village without any great expectations.

‘You know that leprosy is one of the commonest maladies among the peoples of Asia. Climate, water and unhygienic mode of living are the most fruitful soil for this most frightful of all diseases. Only a few years ago one could see victims of it going about the streets of the city, exhibiting their sores, and picking up the money thrown to them by the compassionate. It was torment for town and country. Then the government helped, raised money, and purchased land and buildings, and now these most wretched of all wretched beings are isolated in a village in the neighbourhood of Karachi. I have never been there yet; but we might have a look at it to-day.’

This was the suggestion of our host, and we felt very much more interested, and wondered about the possibility of taking photographs. How would it be?

There was sure to be a strict watch kept; the village would be surrounded by a wall. Accompanied by some of the soldiers on guard, we might perhaps be able to climb a wall, and from that point observe the sick folk.

The driver of our car knew the way, and raced at top speed through two or three villages, then he entered a third that was larger and better laid out than the others. This would be where the guards lived, the big building was, of course, an administrative residence.

Our car stopped in the middle of the market-place. We alighted and looked round in amazement. Where were the soldiers? Who were those dirty children running all over the place? And there, and again there? What could this mean? Were there sick people here also? They were lying about, rolled up in blankets in the blazing sunshine. And why were they all staring at us so wildly?

We walked a few steps toward the big building, hesitating and uncertain. I felt as if an icy hand was gripping the nape of my neck, my legs seemed paralysed, and I stood stock still. This must be Hell, and these creatures around us the devils. Slowly they advanced, limping and creeping from all sides; they formed a great circle round us, and remained standing, crouching or lying and staring in blind rage at us, sound men. Horrors! We were in the leper-village, we were imprisoned in the tomb of live corpses!

I cannot say how long the terror lasted, what I thought or what I felt; I only know that disgust and horror arose within me, choked me, that I wanted to bolt, to get away as quickly as possible from those frightful eyes. And we were surrounded, separated from our car by a human girdle.

'Do give me a hand, the camera, quick, I must get these types,' Lagorio was working, filming, changing

lenses and plates, as if this scene had been built up for him in the studio.

But only for a few seconds did he film, then Hell broke loose! The men standing round us understood what was happening, they realised that their incurable malady was being photographed as a sensation for sound men, and an insane rage gripped them. I understood very well the thoughts of those creatures, doomed to death, and to-day, writing these lines, I am ashamed of our behaviour. There before me I see the rage boiling up in the brains of the lepers, I see the first movements of their arms and legs, I see them creeping up close to us.

I shrieked. All horror was in that cry, and then I felt myself freed: I was able to think again. I thrust my hand into my pocket, found a handful of change, and threw the coins into the crowd. They howled like animals, rolled over one another, scuffled for the coins, scratched, bit, cursed. We had room to breathe, we seized the apparatus, rushed to the car, and jumped in. The driver pressed the self-starter, and the engine did not start!

The human knot disentangled itself, straightened itself out. They saw us, they rushed, they hobbled, they crept up to us. The air was poisoned, we were choking, suffocating, and still the engine would not start!

Crouching back upon the cushions, we stared with horror-dilated eyes at arm-stumps, torn faces, rotting noses and cheekbones. And these inhuman creatures climbed on to the footboard, stared at us, stretched out festering hands to us, and shrieked and yelled for money, money. Our pockets were empty, large and small coins, handkerchiefs, note-books, everything had been thrown away which could procure us a second's air. But they came back again, close to our eyes their greedy, death-tainted hands trembled and clutched.

We tried to beat them off with the camera – we were lost and desperate!

I hardly noticed when the engine started, the car plunged wildly forward and the lepers fell off the footboards in clusters. I had not got over my disgust by the evening, when we sat in the English club.

‘Yes, I can understand that. You should have been warned before you drove there. The leper-village has no guard – I am rather surprised at that myself – but then I do not think that many visitors go there.’ The colonel knew more, he knew the conditions of things in the settlement.

‘And what will you think when I tell you that sound people live there, too; sound for the moment that is to say? Supposing the father of a family here in the town gets the infection somewhere or other, he is sent off to the camp, and his family follow him, the healthy wife and the unsuspecting children. Of course, it is not for weeks, perhaps even months, that one sees signs of the sickness in the wife and children. You are amazed at a love like that, are you not? But the most astounding thing of all was that a European doctor and his wife went to the village to alleviate the sufferings of the sick people, and that this doctor and his young wife have long since caught the infection. These people are driven out of the world of health, they live in Hell for years, until one day the progress of the disease puts a term to their suffering. These two white people follow a Samaritan’s way which is greater than any recognised religion.’

CHAPTER X

FOUR MEN IN A PLANE

‘HERE, look where you’re going; I got your old slipper in my face then!’

‘Sorry, but I want to go outside – haven’t been feeling too comfortable inside since yesterday. You will have to get up, otherwise I cannot do it, not being exactly a sylph.’

‘Quiet there, you idiots; I am trying to get a spot of sleep,’ Thom growled.

With a good deal of grumbling Lagorio got up out of his hammock, and made way for Klausmann to get to the door of the cabin.

‘Here, take your torch with you, otherwise you old sleepy-head, you will be toppling into the water.’ Lagorio was concerned about Klausmann; but he still went on grumbling at him for disturbing his night’s rest, as he crawled back to his hammock. He could not go to sleep yet, because he would have to get up when Klausmann returned.

I, too, was awake by this time, but said not a word; it tickled me to observe the manoeuvres in our ‘hotel-bedroom’.

Four men in a plane. The cabin which was only seven feet long was at the same time living-room, bedroom, dining-room, luggage-room, office and reception-room for visitors.

It is no joke to coop four men up for months on end in such close quarters. Perhaps the most difficult

task that the leader of an expedition has to tackle is the maintenance of good temper and good humour when nerves become frayed, and opinions are apt to be blurted out too harshly. Man needs freedom of movement, and occasionally an hour to himself. If he is for ever treading on the toes of his companions, his nerves, however good they may be, will go on strike.

In the meantime, quiet had been restored in the cabin. Klausmann had returned, and was serenely snoring once more in his hammock. For my own part I could not rest: the air was heavy, and there were two or three mosquitoes humming about. Presently the alarm-clock shrilled out its inexorable summons. 4.30 a.m. – a time when every decent, God-fearing man should be asleep, but clocks have no pity! Only another minute or two of quiet in the cabin, and then things got lively.

‘Good morning, have you slept all right?’ ‘That was a dirty trick! Who put the corn-beef can in my hammock?’ Poor Thom! He woke up to find that a tin had been digging holes in his behind during the night.

‘Out with you, gentlemen please. In three-quarters of an hour we must be starting!’ For the next few minutes the cabin was as full of bustle as an ant-hill. One had lost his left shoe, another could not find his tooth-brush. ‘Who has been using my shirt as a duster? What am I to put on now, I only brought three of them with me? The other two have been in the dirty-linen bag for days.’ That was a question that cropped up every day; but a plane is no pantech-nicon: luggage had to be strictly rationed, and reduced to the very minimum.

It was a formidable job to bring order out of the chaos in the cabin: hammocks, swimming-suits, camera trunks, film-cases, anchor lines, flying-charts, suits, shoes, linen, typewriter, bully-beef tins – all lying

about! Every morning things were neatly tidied up; but when the four hammocks were slung up at night, everything had to be tucked away into corners, otherwise there was the danger that the sharp edge of a trunk or of a camera might dig one in the ribs.

The hammocks, two by two, and one on top of the other, more than filled all the available space in the cabin, and in the ceremony of getting to bed the strictest precedent had to be observed: the two top berths were occupied first, then the lower one at the back, and lastly the one by the door. It was the duty of the occupant of the berth by the door to act as watchman. We took it in turns, going out every hour to see to anchorage, lighting-up, weather and movement of tide. The hammocks were slung so close together that the man sleeping on top had always to lie on his back, for fear of hitting his neighbour with any part of his anatomy, like hips or elbows.

Astonishing as it may sound, the cabin was always as neat as a pin in a quarter of an hour. Our morning toilet did not take long. The wash-tank was filled the night before, but the water was sufficient only for teeth, with perhaps a few drops over for faces. However, that did not matter very much, because during the flight we smeared hands and face with a thick layer of grease as a protection against wind and sun. As for breakfast, a gulp of something out of the thermos-flask and a bite of dry bread were all we wanted. In the early morning there was neither time nor inclination for anything in the way of comfort and enjoyment. Already it was 4.50 a.m., and the start had been fixed for 5.15, so the first thing to do was to get motor and plane ship-shape, and to keep the flying-chart in readiness. At 5.5 the motor started, the lines were cast off the buoy; the machine moved over the dark waters to the extreme end of the take-off line which had been fixed the night before. Dawn

was already breaking in the east, there was light enough to start by.

All clear, full speed! It is indescribably beautiful to fly into the awakening morning, to meet the sun. The horizon in the west was still quite dark, but in the east, the direction in which we were flying, it was lit with a dull gold. Like live wave-ribbons, the first rays of light already quivered behind the sea when the sun was still far below the horizon. Spellbound we gazed at the wonder unfolding before our eyes: first yellow, then red, now like a burning fire, was the light in the distance, and then the golden ball of the sun rose out of the misty water. Our eyes almost ached in so much light and beauty. No wonder that the crew of the *Atlantis* forgot its woes in such an hour!

After an hour's flight there was the big breakfast. Thom remained at the controls, and I crawled through the connecting door into the cabin to Lagorio and Klausmann. In the meantime those two had not been idle. The small folding-table was nicely laid for breakfast: coffee, tea, bread, butter, cold meat and most likely some dainty or other from the larder of a friend. Hospitality is a great and praiseworthy virtue on a long flight. In every port – even the smallest – invitations rained down upon us, and four young men are always hungry, and more than grateful for the good things bestowed upon them at parting.

How would you like to eat your breakfast in the air, looking down upon Baghdad or some Indian fishing villages through the cabin window? It was not every day that one had such an experience, and I made the most of those minutes.

However it was time to relieve Thom in the pilot's seat. He had been casting longing glances at the breakfast-table. I was glad to be alone in front – alone in the air with my thoughts which hastened far ahead of the plane, picturing future and good fortune.



Bedouin's camp



"Moon landscape" of Persian coast



But, unfortunately, an expeditionary flight is not merely a pleasure trip. In two hours we should be arriving at our next port, so we had to prepare in good time. Thom and Klausmann sat at the controls, while Lagorio helped me to get out the papers in the cabin. Any information worth knowing concerning each of the places to be visited by us on our flight had been carefully written down: 'Address of Governor or Mayor', 'Are there any Germans here?' 'How much oil must we tank?' and things like that. Then, before landing, I had to put a few finishing touches to my toilet – at least put on a clean shirt and a tie, and scrub the motor-oil off my hands and face.

For the landing I was, of course, at the controls. Then I left the machine to my companions, to be got ready for the next stage. I could go ashore only for two hours, and was obliged unfortunately to refuse several invitations. One had to bear in mind that it was perhaps the first time for many years that an aeroplane had come to this place, and it was therefore something of a treat! The natives had been waiting for days to see the wonder from the skies. The white settlers in the place made preparations for receptions, great banquets, and perhaps, as a special surprise, a ball for which all the women-folk had been making themselves new frocks for weeks. But the crew of the plane had to have other interests as well as a love of dancing, we had another flight before us that afternoon, for it is a long way round the continent of Asia.

Shortly after midday we started again. The information about the last port was filed away among the 'done with' documents. We should have to do another 500 miles before the day's work was finished. Not that it would be finished then, for in the evening we could not very well refuse to attend long-prepared festivities. The hosts would have been looking forward for weeks to this evening, and it would not have

occurred to them that their guests had been making speeches at other tables yesterday and for many a day before, and that the same old questions had been answered time and again.

I was always glad to take on this job of speaking at the receptions, for it was easy to give pleasure with a few suitable phrases, and above all to put in a good word for the 'Fatherland'. Late in the night we returned to the plane and to a few hours' sleep before the alarm-clock routed us out again.

Only very rarely – I believe only on three or four evenings were we free to remain on board, and I shall never forget those evenings. After supper in the cabin we all four sat on the wings. The cigarettes, cigars or pipes in our mouths were the only points of light in the darkness on the water. For long periods we did not speak a word, our brains were busy with all our experiences – good and bad – of the past weeks, or we were conjuring up visions of our old homes, and in the light of homesickness seeing them in all their beauty!

Then one of us hummed a tune, and the others joined in. Klausmann fetched the musical instruments – the mouth-harmonica for himself and a tin saxophone – price twenty pfennigs – for me. I do not suppose that our evening concert would rouse you to any great pitch of enthusiasm; but it was a rare treat for ourselves.

Later it grew cold on the water; the 'night watchman' slung the hammocks, stowed away all the impedimenta – in the cockpit or any other corner! and lit up for the night. Then came the 'trick-climbing' – into bed – the end of the day for four men who lived on a seaplane!

CHAPTER XI

SOMETHING ABOUT INDIA

I wish to preface my chapter on India by a short explanation:

What I am writing here is my own actual experience. I cannot permit myself to utter judgments or make sweeping generalisations about a country so vast and a civilisation so ancient, from what is literally a flying visit.

I shall try to relate some experiences of India – naturally of the coast only – and begin with Mangalore. It lies to the south of Bombay on the west coast of India, and was chosen as intermediate landing-place on the flight between Bombay and Colombo. We intended staying for an hour only, to take in a supply of fuel. Our plan was: early start in Bombay, intermediate landing in Mangalore and immediate resumption of flight to Colombo.

The flight from Bombay to the south along the coast was an interesting experience. We had been told that we should be flying over territory in which very few of the population had ever seen a plane, and we realised the truth of this as we proceeded.

We were flying about sixty feet above the fishing villages; the huts looked fresh and clean under the giant palms. It must have been a sensation for the good people.

In the quiet of the morning they go to work as usual. Suddenly a faint, humming sound makes itself heard;

gradually it becomes louder and louder, and then, overhead, like a giant bird, flies some supernatural monster. Small wonder that the fisher-folk in their terror jump out of their boats into the sea!

Up aloft we amused ourselves tremendously; the scene unrolled itself before us like a film. Then Mangalore lay below, and something queer was happening there, too. From afar I could see dense crowds: the walls of the harbour, the streets and the roofs of the houses were black with people; they crowded into fishing-boats, and swarmed up the masts; they were everywhere.

I was a trifle apprehensive lest some of the boats should cross the landing-track of the plane; but nothing of the sort happened, everything went perfectly. The harbour-master told us with pride that for a fortnight he had been organising the preparations for our arrival, that the majority of the people had been waiting on the harbour for days, not daring to stir for fear of missing the 'wonder from the skies', and if we had not put in an appearance for another week, it is quite certain that they would have waited till then. From this fact I deduced the first truth: the Indian has time.

After the landing there were scenes of enthusiasm such as I had never before witnessed except at football-matches or at bull-fights in Spain. Those thousands of people, old and young, clapped their hands, hopped from one leg to the other, made signs to us, surged forward, and in so doing pushed the ones in front into the water! But no matter, up they scrambled again, shaking the water off their faces and hands, laughing and joining in the universal clamour. The Indian is appreciative.

It was a great disappointment for them that we had to leave in an hour. They had prepared all manner of festivities for us; but unfortunately a longer stay

was impossible. I had to hurry ashore to make some official calls; in full dress uniform I got into a boat, and was rowed ashore. The boat was a very rickety affair and a few yards from the landing stage I fell head-first into the brown water, tropical uniform and all! Mangalore laughed, shouted and howled, and for days afterwards looked back with joy at the picture of the floundering pilot of the 'wonder of the skies'. The Indian loves a joke.

The plane was ready to start; we proposed to go a few hundred yards through the harbour to get a suitable take off. The people accompanied us, running, gesticulating, falling over one another – a wonderful sight! Presently we had enough start-surface, and prepared to turn, when there was a slight thud under the floats, then another, harder one. The engine was running at full speed – no use! We were sitting on a sand-bank; we had been unable to see the shallow place of the river because of the dirty water. The result was that we had to remain there until the rising tide could float us again. It was a day lost, worse luck! However, we were amply compensated, because in that time we were enabled to see pictures of Indian life which a European can very seldom have had the chance to see.

It was not very pleasant sitting in the plane. The tropical sun was overhead, burning down upon us, almost choking us in the cabin, and scorching us on the red-hot wings. But we had no time to dwell upon those discomforts, for we were gazing in alarm at what was taking place on the shore.

Sensation in Mangalore! The mass of humanity rolled up on the beach there, halted for a few seconds opposite us, and then began to move into the water towards us.

No special preparations were necessary for this. Most of them were barefoot in any case, and those

wearing sandals and stockings, took them off and stuck them on their umbrellas. You must know that the umbrella is the most useful article in India: it protects alike from tropical sun and tropical rain. Coats or tunics were picked up and clutched together in front, then with long, stork-like tread, they came towards us. They were not slow to find two shallow channels, and by those they approached, racing and paddling and making a terrible din.

In a few minutes the plane was encircled by a ring of humanity. The rear ranks pressed hard against those in front; they in turn could not make any resistance, and were squeezed against the body and wings of the plane. What a mercy it was that our wonder-bird was constructed of steel!

We were completely powerless. In such predicaments it was always Klausmann who came to the rescue. He fetched the 'bucket for special use' out of the cabin, leapt on to the wing, dipped the bucket at the end of its long rope into the dirty water, and threw the contents over the heads of those standing nearest. That made some impression, pressure was now exerted from the front backwards, and the swarms of people were shoved a few yards from the plane. But those dripping creatures were not at all angry, they understood the necessity for our action – in my opinion the Indian is not particularly fastidious about dirt.

For hours we sat like monkeys in a cage. Every movement was observed, criticised, laughed at. It was a good school in which to be cured of a love of the footlights. But at the same time those hours gave us the opportunity for a lavish study of human types.

What a multi-coloured picture it was – even to the complexions! One saw tints from the lightest possible white to the deepest black. Every Hindu wears on his brow the visiting-card of his god, dots and strokes

in every conceivable colour, often whole patterns. The red dot of the followers of Shiva predominates, the worshippers of another god paint three upright strokes: the centre one red and the outer two white. The head-coverings distinguish religions and sects also, for the most part there are turbans in all colours. Followers of Gandhi go about proudly in their white caps, and amongst these one sometimes sees green felt hats which are really at home in the Bavarian highlands. In some way or other the head must express membership of a movement or personal leanings: by the painting of the forehead, by the head-coverings or by the hair-dressing. Some have shaved the hair on their foreheads, others on their temples, and others again wear tonsures of different shapes. Not a few have shorn their heads absolutely bare, and the tropical sun sparkles on those bald heads. Perhaps five or six hairs have been left in the middle of the head, probably to act as a fan! On the whole it is a grotesque and dirty picture – all Indians are not good-looking.

As for their clothing, it consists of trousers or skirt with a gaily coloured over-shirt. At first I thought that some of them had forgotten to poke their shirts into their trousers, but apparently it is the custom to wear shirts over trousers in India. The brilliantly hued shawl-like garments which they mostly wear slung over their shoulders are very pretty.

In general the Indians look healthy, they appear to be pretty tough, one sees very few fat paunches. But their faces are old and their eyes have a weary expression. We were told by some Europeans who came to visit us during our spell of waiting that the great majority of the Indian people are very poor. There is no middle-class, nothing between the extremes of riches and beggary. But so far as my own observations went, I can say that the people looked happy,

they rejoiced like children over the smallest thing, and they had a smile for every kind word that was given them.

One last fact I must chronicle – the discovery of it has been a great pleasure to myself – the women of India are decidedly good-looking and they look splendid in their long, picturesque, gaily-coloured garments, with their rich chains and ornaments and the brilliants in their noses. And in spite of their beauty, the Indian women live in a very retired and modest way, and that is something which, unfortunately, I found in very few countries.

CHAPTER XII

OVER 'FRIENDSHIP'S' GRAVE

IN an earlier chapter I referred to the flight with the *Friendship* six months before from Berlin to China, round Asia. I shall now tell the story of that terrible catastrophe.

We had left Berlin on the 12th September, and in twelve flying-days had touched at Constantinople, Baghdad, Bushire, Karachi, Bombay, Colombo. Only two rest-days were included. We might well be satisfied with the 7,500 miles which our seaplane had done. On the 24th we started out from Colombo. But it was the thirteenth day of our flight! and before we left Germany we had solemnly promised not to fly on the thirteenth day from the date of departure. Unfortunately we were forced by circumstances to speed up a bit, and were therefore flying in spite of our promise. The weather-reports were good: they said that the coming weeks promised the best of weather for the remainder of our flight to China. In the Bay of Bengal, so dreaded for its monsoon gales, we should have an absolutely cloudless sky, for the monsoon season would be well over. The most difficult part of the flight from Berlin to China was behind us, and in five to six days we should have reached our goal.

Carefree and confident of the future we parted from

our good friends in Colombo, and started for Madras and Vizagapatam.

Even now, while writing these lines, I find it difficult to account for the general feeling of nerviness on board the plane on that thirteenth day of our flight. I was irritated, of all things, because the flowers given me in Berlin were withering in the corner beside me! Then an upset stomach did not improve my temper – whether from Persian beer or from over-ripe fruit, I cannot say, but we were all three suffering from this misery. Our estimable ‘peacemaker’ had to work hard. This was a small teddy-bear, fastened between the two pilots in the cockpit. If tempers flared up, and a wordy warfare ensued, the head of the teddy was turned in the direction of the man who had been the greater offender, and the unwritten law said that the delinquent had thereafter to hold his peace for ten minutes.

So we flew for two or three hours along the coast, seeing nothing of India’s fertility, in a state of gloomy preoccupation. The weather-predictions seemed for once in a way to have been correct: the sky was quite clear, only far out on the horizon over the Bay of Bengal a small grey-yellow cloud was to be seen. But we had no fears regarding a small cloud like that, for both the plane and ourselves had given ample proof of our flying powers in rain, hail and fog.

In Madras we made an intermediate landing; Schonger and Klausmann remained on board to prepare for the next lap. In spite of my bad temper I had to assume an agreeable expression and go to make a few calls in the city. I wasted no time about it and was soon back on board.

It was rather remarkable that the plane should also, apparently, be suffering from nerves. During tanking operations the machine suddenly began to drift, the anchor dragged over the bottom without gripping.

It was a ticklish business to catch the runaway a short distance from the stone mole. The plane had not indulged in such tantrums before, and we were glad to get away from the dangerous stone wall and to be flying again at full speed.

Taking my seat, I caught sight of the withered flowers once more, for some unknown reason, and was again plunged into gloom. We were flying northwards, the country on our left and the sea on our right. The destination for the day was Vizagapatam, which is four hours' flight from Madras. When preparing for the expedition I never could stand this Vizagapatam: I could neither spell nor pronounce the impossible word, and I was perpetually stumbling over it – little thinking that our flight was to find its untimely and terrible ending near this town!

Two hours passed and the motor still hummed with its usual regularity. The weather appeared to be changing a little after all; the small cloud on the horizon had grown, and the sea had assumed a leaden, dead-looking colour. However there was no reason for any sort of alarm; in two hours, or perhaps an hour and a half, we should be landing in Vizagapatam, and sleep off our bad temper there.

What followed, came with incredible swiftness. The cloud, arising from the sea, expanded to a gigantic and menacing size. In a few minutes a haze obscured the sky, first grey, then darker, finally deep black, and we were hemmed in by it, in front, behind, to the right and to the left. Then the first raindrops fell and presently the water was pouring and gushing from rent clouds. In the plane a voice roared: 'Monsoon gale!'

At a height of thirty feet or less, we flew over a sea now wildly agitated, driving on at an uncanny rate before the strong south wind. The wind became a gale, and hurled our plane through the

air like a withered leaf. Visibility was fifty yards or less.

Now it was a case for the utmost caution, but of course there were still no grounds for anxiety. We should simply feel our way along the coast and we were bound to come to Vizagapatam. We had only to follow this harbour entrance, and then we could land in the harbour-basin, sheltered from the wind. For forty or fifty minutes we flew madly on; navigation was not easy owing to the flying speed and the bad visibility; but we knew at each moment where we were, we knew that we had only to get round one more cape before reaching the entrance to the harbour. There, before us, was the cape; we rounded it with a sharp curve, but where was the entrance to the harbour, where? In the next few minutes I realised that our plight was serious, that this might be the end. The harbour of Vizagapatam is flanked by two hills, not more than four or six hundred feet high, but the mist had settled heavily over them, and was almost touching the surface of the water, so that a flight through the narrow harbour-entrance was out of the question.

I had to keep cool at all costs. At such moments the brain has to work like lightning. Could we fly back? Against this wind, which had almost the velocity of our machine, it was impossible. Could we cruise before the entrance to the harbour, until the storm had somewhat abated? That, too, was impossible: we had not enough fuel to last out. In addition to which, darkness would be falling soon. . . . In spite of this we remained in the air as long as we could, about ten or fifteen minutes. The gale increased in violence and tossed the plane about at its pleasure. Our world was now all grey and wet: below us the sea, and around us a wall of rain. We could not tell whether it was night or day, we had

lost consciousness of time, and seemed to be flying in a grey cavern. With perfect composure we prepared for the worst, put on our swimming-suits, and placed light-pistols and ammunition in readiness for distress-signals. We could not hold the machine any longer, it scarcely obeyed our will.

But suddenly a black shadow scuttled under us; we could scarcely make it out – a ship! It anchored farther away from the coast in the open sea; like ourselves, it could not make the entrance to the harbour. My brain worked feverishly: we should have to land in the lee of the ship, close under its protection. Possibly the sea might be calmer there, the wind less strong, perhaps there was a chance that all might end well.

We put it to the test. Gas off, we landed not twenty yards from the ship's side. The floats of the plane were touching the water. After a couple of hops over the crest of the waves, it settled quietly, and we were beginning to think that the worst was over, when suddenly a great wave came along. It heaved the plane up, flung it down on its side, then dashed itself over cockpit and cabin. There was a strange, harsh, grinding sound of torn metal; this was the end, we were sinking!

The right wing was cut off, and pinned down by the sea; it was sucking itself full of water. The plane might cant over at any moment. Quick as thought, Klausmann and myself climbed on to the left wing which still protruded out of the water, and clung to its extreme edge. In this way we provided a counterpoise to the submerged wing, and held the plane in a floating position as long as possible. Meanwhile, Schonger calmly stood in the cockpit and fired off two, three red distress-signals – the S.O.S.

We had lost sight of the ship, the current was dragging us out into the grey haze. All around us was nothing but rain, a wild sea, and more rain. Another

signal went off, and then the ammunition was soaked through. The cabin was full of water which made the plane heavy as lead, and would drag it down into the greedy sea.

The left wing was now almost perpendicular. Schonger had clambered up to us with the help of a rope. Clapsed close together we squatted on the wing, knowing full well that we should presently be thrown into the sea. We wanted to be together in this last fight, so we tied the rope firmly round us, and waited for rescue or death. We were keeping faith, as we promised to do weeks ago when we set out on our flight.

The plane was being smashed up before our eyes. The heavy breakers crushed its metal walls as if they were made of paper. Our faithful friend was being mortally wounded, and we could do nothing but wait and pray. The minutes seemed hours, it was horrible.

At last a heavy wave – a breaker – came along; it broke over the plane, burying it under its waters; we capsized, in a high curve we were tossed over the wreckage into the raging sea.

Three men drifted and clung together, then caught hold of a float which was still miraculously intact. Beside me I saw for the last time the withered flowers from home.

I cannot say how long we were in the water, whether we were afraid of death, and what we thought about. I can only remember a few words that Schonger, who had a wound in the leg, shouted into my ear: 'You know, old chap, if a shark comes this way, I only hope he'll take my game leg and not the sound one!' A remark like that, so full of real humour, is a tonic for the nerves in such a moment of extreme peril.

We were not washed away, neither were we devoured by a shark. We waited – how long I do not

know – and then, out of the grey wall of rain, there emerged a ship's lifeboat. Strong arms gripped us, and hauled us on board. We were rowed to the ship, and a friendly captain gave us a large glass of whisky. Never in my life, I can assure you, have I tasted a dram so good as that!

To-day we were flying over the grave of the *Friendship*. It was the 10th April, 1932, six months after the frightful catastrophe occurred down there. What had happened in the meantime is easily and quickly told: three ship-wrecked men travelled back home, having lost plane, equipment and all their belongings, and with the labour of years thrown away.

Below us lay the cape, the entrance to the harbour and a sea as smooth as glass. With the German flag dipping in token of respect we made 'three rounds of honour' over the grave of the sunken *Friendship*: the first out of gratitude to the plane, the second in memory of a great fellowship at the moment of dire distress, and the third with the prayer for a happy future and for the safe accomplishment of the present expedition.

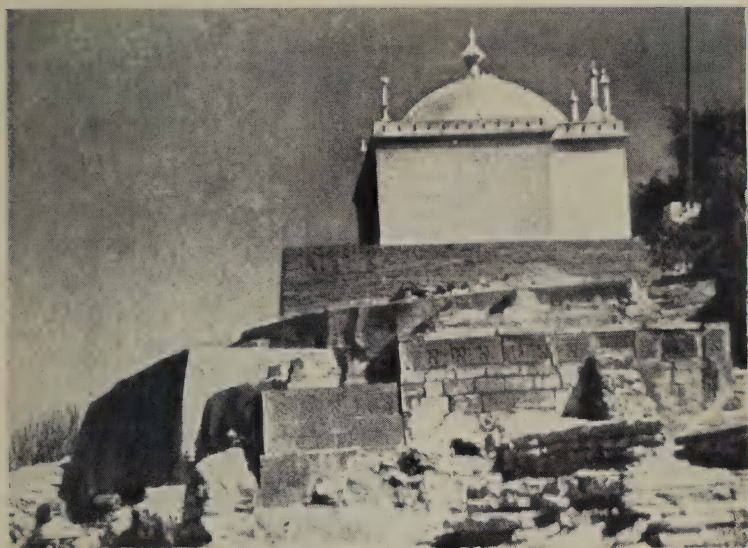
From here onwards, we should be flying into unknown territory. Was fate going to treat us better this time? Klausmann and I prayed that it might; we were confident, and had not the slightest idea that in a few weeks we should be flying to our destruction – to Hell!

CHAPTER XIII

TALES PLEASANT AND OTHERWISE

IT must have struck you that I write very little about the technical side of flying, that I tell you nothing about big receptions and the grand people who attended them. Well, my explanation is that I am writing this book for the generality of readers, that I am speaking about the actual occurrences on board a seaplane during a world-flight, and that I attach less value to times of departure, data regarding course and weather, distances covered and performance of plane, motor and instruments. There is a chapter at the end of the book for experts, should they want this sort of thing. I should like the reader to share our joys and sorrows, and as later on, in the Hell of Australia, there are sorrows enough and to spare, I am now recounting preferably the amusing or pleasant events – in this chapter even some tales which are the reverse of pleasant.

Lagorio was camera-man on board; he was the most splendid companion, but sometimes it was a bit difficult to work with him. If we had been guided by his advice, we should still be in India, I believe. Every time he saw a new landscape or new types of humanity – and that was pretty often – he was at once fired with enthusiasm, and would fain take photographs from morning to night – anything from child-welfare in Persia to family-life among the Zulu Kaffirs. I have never seen Lagorio look pleased after a start.



A holy fakir's tomb



Enthusiasm in an Indian school



He has always grumbled over opportunities lost, and never to be recovered. At landing he was always just the opposite: lynx-eyed, he was already on the track of the best subjects for a film while we were still in the air. Take Ceylon, for instance:

‘I simply must film the Ceylon fishermen. Marvellous! Don’t you think so?’

Well, I really did not know, I only remembered that there was a well-known Ceylon tea, but no world-famous fishermen.

‘— and I must have a whole forenoon for it.’

He exercised his full powers of persuasion to get me to postpone our next start till eleven o’clock. We had to do a normal day’s journey, and with a late start were acting against the first rules for tropical flying: ‘On account of the warmth of the air in the Tropics, you should start in the early hours of the morning.’ Well, this time would be an exception. However, he would have to be back on board by 10.30 a.m. at latest, because we should have to start at eleven o’clock punctually.

In the very early hours he started out, armed with his camera, and full of enterprise. I may tell you at once that of course he was not back at 10.30 a.m.; nor did he appear a little later. Not till evening, after a long and somewhat anxious wait, did we see his rowing-boat coming towards us. Late arrivals were rare amongst us, something unusual must have happened. I shall let him explain in his own words:

‘The most amazing things have been happening, boys! This is a daft country. I do not understand the language, but I understand the people still less. Would you believe it! I had been walking along the coast, making photographs of the prettiest things: fishing-villages, a hut — inside and out — types of fishermen and so on. It was already nearly ten o’clock,

and in half an hour I should have to be back on board. It then occurred to me that I might quickly film the fishing-boats putting to sea. It was tremendously difficult making the somewhat limited natives understand what it was I wanted: they were to set out from their huts with nets and fishing-tackle on their backs, go to the boats, prepare them to receive the catch, and set sail from the shore. At last the men understood, and everything went perfectly. The boat was shoved off, they had now to row me a few yards out also, so that I should be able to film the village from the boat. I took my seat in the boat, and made the good souls understand that they must row me out from the land. This they did, and I took my photographs and had finished. Then I wished to go back, but what do you suppose? From that time on, they did not understand another word of what I wanted to tell them. They set the sail, and I was carried a few miles out to sea; they fished and I sat helpless – I could not very well swim back with my camera. I shouted myself hoarse, and danced like a dervish in the narrow boat, but the fishers only thought that I was trying to spur them on to further effort; they kept on throwing out the nets, and sailed round the coast as happy as kings.

‘After an hour I gave it up. Nobody could stand such exertion indefinitely in this heat, and moreover it was already about noon, and too late to start. I left myself in the hands of the zealous fisher lads. As I lay stretched out in the shadow of the sail, they doubtless believed that it was a pleasure for me to cruise around with them; hour after hour they sailed with me, and I believe we should still have been out there, if there had been enough drinking-water and provisions on board. However, I have got the most marvellous photographs out of this fishing expedition any way.

‘You may imagine how I raced, once I was safely back on land. Then I took my rowing-boat, and came straight out to you.’

It was quite true that he had come back on board to us; but how he did so, you must hear: the rowing-boat approached, and came alongside the float; Lagorio in his haste made to climb on to the plane, slipped, and fell into the water; his ‘marvellous pictures’ were no more! That was a decidedly painful story.

And here is another. A well-known man in Colombo told us one day that we absolutely must go to the south coast of the island. A famous French Count was said to live there – Count de Money, I think he was – and we should be able to take the best of pictures in his house. The Count had bought an island some years previously, and built a castle ‘à la Louis Quatorze’ on it.

We should have to see a thing like this, of course. We set off, therefore, across the island, asking our way until we arrived at a small fishing-village. We were then on the coast, and, sure enough, not fifty yards off the shore lay an island. It was not much bigger than our plane, but there was a charming house on it, set in a brilliant little garden, and surrounded with palms. One might perhaps call it a castle, if one were specially well-disposed.

As we were going to visit a Count, we naturally put on our best clothes, and well-groomed and with shiny shoes we stood on the shore, waiting for the motor-boat or at any rate the large rowing-boat with cushions which would doubtless come to row us across. But what happened? Over on the island appeared a gentleman in his bathing-suit, he entered the water, waded and then swam to us. In friendly greeting he removed his pith-helmet, introduced himself as master of the house, invited us to his home, and asked us with

a touch of surprise where our bathing-suits were. The point of this story was that our hospitable Count de Money possessed no boat to row people across, that his guests could only visit him in bathing-suits and must live in them for days or weeks upon his island. Any other dress he rejected with a shrug of the shoulders. There was nothing for us to do, therefore, but to tie up in a bundle our shoes, stockings and uniforms, place the bundles on our heads, and wade out to the island of Count de Money in our – fortunately clean – underpants.

The next story is really very painful, as the injured party in the case was a society lady, the wife of the Governor of Pondicheri – a small French colony on the east coast of India. We landed there at noon for an intermediate fuelling, and were entertained with the greatest cordiality in the Governor's house. At table there were a good many formalities, as the lady of the house was present.

The good will on the part of our hosts was so great that the Governor, with his wife and some officers, accompanied us to the plane when we prepared to depart. They inspected the machine, said a few parting words to us, and then we prepared to start. This was the situation: the plane lay on the beach. The sea was choppy, there was a land-wind. This meant that we should have to start straight up from the shore at full speed against the strong movement of the sea, because a manœuvre with a slowly running engine is not advisable when the waves are rough. The plane stood with its nose to the sea, behind it on the beach were thousands of spectators, in the front row our kindly hosts with the officers and of course in the best place in the row, the Governor's wife. On saying good-bye I drew the attention of the ladies and gentlemen to the risk they ran of being splashed by the propeller, unless they stood a good way back. Then I

took my seat, and unfortunately did not look round again to see whether my advice had been followed. The engine began to run, full speed immediately and start.

A few feet up I circled round, waved my hand gaily, and – could scarcely believe my eyes. An excited crowd was pressing round the Governor and his party, evidently going to the assistance of a lady standing right in front and dripping with water.

When I saw what I had done, I cleared out with all possible speed from the uncomfortable neighbourhood of Pondicheri.

As final item in this painful chapter, I shall give you in brief the story of a world-tour.

The loss of the *Friendship* by Vizagapatam meant a total loss of luggage. A few days in the town and inquiries up and down the coast for goods washed ashore proved fruitless. Some months after the return to Germany came a letter from Calcutta, to say that a box had been washed ashore, and was being forwarded immediately. The carefully tied-up package was sent from town to town, following exactly the flying-route prepared for the *Friendship*: Calcutta, Rangoon, Siam, China and back to Germany via Siberia. Meanwhile the present expedition started, and the package was sent on after me, this time by air-mail: London, Athens, Baghdad, Karachi, Calcutta. In the interval a great deal of correspondence took place, and numerous costly telegrams informed me that I might claim my property in Calcutta. I arrived there in great excitement and proceeded to the German consulate, where, very solemnly, I was handed a package the size of my hand and covered with stamps from every corner of the globe. I was at first disappointed at the size – or otherwise – of the package, but cheered up at the thought that it might

contain my lost valuables. I opened it with great care and – in a worthless trinket-box – beheld four collar-studs! This is a true, annoying, expensive and very painful story.

CHAPTER XIV

ANOTHER TUSSLE WITH THE BAY OF BENGAL

‘MAN, what abominable weather that Bay of Bengal treats one to, in spite of its innocent air! I’m thankful to be on this protected river with no bones broken.’

Lagorio was right. The last few hours had been the reverse of happy or peaceful. The flight from Calcutta to here across the Bay of Bengal, was anything but a pleasure-trip. Before the start in Calcutta the weather report mentioned small local thunderstorms which we would probably encounter on the flying-route from Calcutta to Akyab and thence to Rangoon. ‘But these local storms are easy to fly round,’ said the report.

Last night we had a visit from a white-haired sea-captain who had spent a lifetime sailing round the Indian coast, and what he said was:

‘You must be very, very careful in the Bay of Bengal; I expect you know that tricky bit of water only too well from your crash there last year. In this part of the globe the weather changes in a twinkling, before you realise what’s up even!’

We put more confidence in the old sea-dog than in the modern apparatus of the meteorological station, and should be glad indeed when we had the flight to Rangoon safely behind us and had finally got the better of the Bay of Bengal.

In any case I took the most necessary measures of

precaution, and sent Thom on to Rangoon by steamer with all the heavy luggage. Supposing we did have a gale, a light plane would be easier to pilot than a heavy one.

In the early hours of the morning we said good-bye to Calcutta, and started with the rising sun. Under us lay India's largest seaport, the estuary of the sacred Ganges and presently the sea. It was 280 miles to Akyab across the Bay of Bengal, as the plane flew.

At first the horizon was clear, as it was for the *Friendship* six months previously, when the tiny, yellow cloud changed in so sinister a fashion. This time there was a tiny, black cloud, but one could not turn back for a thing like that; after all, a small cloud need not invariably predict a hurricane in the Bay of Bengal.

The course was altered a trifle, and the cloud remained on our left; presently it was joined by another and yet another – probably the 'local thunder-storms' of the weather report. We flew in a zigzag course between the black cloud-masses; to right and left of us it was raining and lightning; for the time being we managed to keep dry.

This went on for two hours, and we had only 100 more miles to do to reach the coast and say good-bye to the Bay of Bengal. But my old enemy was not going to let us off so easily! The clouds were by this time gigantic, and advancing on all sides but still leaving a small dry valley through which we could slip – we might have been on an exhibition flight!

Then the furies were let loose! The valleys became ravines, we had already had the first sprinkling of rain; one more narrow passage between two enormous banks of black cloud, and we were in the witches' cauldron!

Rain! You know all about the rain, I expect? But do you know what tropical rain is like? It comes down in buckets-full, as if out of hose-pipes. We flew

a few feet over a darkly raging sea, and the squalls made the plane almost impossible to manage. The machine reared and plunged like a horse; I clung desperately to the wheel and expected every moment that the whole thing would go to pieces below me.

We had still about sixty miles to go before we reached the safety of the coast. Would the plane hold out? And would my own arm-muscles hold out? The fight was grim but it was likewise exhilarating, and filled me with a deep satisfaction – I was fighting not only for myself, but for my companions who were compelled to sit still and do nothing. I would not have changed places with them.

This breathless combat had been going on for an hour; the coast would surely appear any minute now. But before it did, I became aware of the irregularity of the motor. A glance at the petrol-gauge showed me the cause of this – lack of petrol! Apparently the tank had been leaking. With all speed I switched on to the emergency tank which had a supply sufficient for a bare twelve minutes. Just think how those minutes flew and how we prayed for the coast and a safe landing! Surely the insatiable Bay would not devour the *Atlantis* as it had done the *Friendship*? Agonising thought – I would dismiss it and try to keep calm and cool!

I have no wish to make the situation out to be more dramatic than it really was, but at that very moment when the coastline was showing below us our motor stopped. A river entered the sea at that very spot, as it happened, and it was the work of a few seconds to descend and anchor the *Atlantis* safely to the bank. I was reminded of the words of a former flying-instructor: 'Boys, flying is child's play, your grannie could fly; but to be a good pilot you want above all things plenty of nerve and a good bit of luck.'

A few hundred yards up the river we found that

there was a village of about twenty huts and a large government house. We called on the Governor who was obviously feeling the heat, poor man, but greeted us with Asiatic courtesy, and offered to be of service to us in his official capacity, if we needed any help. He never thought that we should take him at his word, and looked rather glum when I told him that we simply had to procure 100 litres of petrol, because we were expected in Rangoon next day, and that an important expedition depended on his help.

Petrol? It was not to be had. And there was no telegraph office. But in four days the coast boat would be arriving; we could send word by it to Akyab, sixty miles to the south, and the petrol would arrive in another three days. Naturally I did not accept this information as final. One gets used to eliminating the word 'impossible' from one's vocabulary on an expedition like this. There simply must always be a way out, and as it happened another possibility presented itself here. After long discussions with the whole population of the village, we were told that petrol might, after all, be found in the store of the 'big merchant' of the place. He – it appeared – had had the intention of purchasing a car, and had first procured the spare parts and the necessary fuel. The only drawback was that this future car-owner was at the moment away from home, and not expected back for some days.

Things were now looking a trifle better. On the river-bank lay the *Atlantis* with empty petrol-tanks. In the village was a warehouse which contained petrol behind its locked doors. We should have preferred having the keys of course, but seeing that they were wandering all over India, there was nothing for it but to break open the doors!

This solution did not immediately appeal to the Governor. He tried hard to get out of it, but I was

obdurate. On his head, I said, would rest the responsibility if we arrived behind-time in Rangoon. He gave in. The burglary took place. It was not a burglary under cover of the darkness, but in the presence of the whole village and with the supervision of the Governor himself.

In a very few minutes more the tanks were refilled, a receipt signed, and we were saying our good-bye's and starting out again. The whole affair must have appeared a terrific hustle to the Governor and the villagers.

A gale in the harbour of Akyab!

I am not superstitious, but I have a distinct impression that the Bay of Bengal is my bitterest enemy. The business of obtaining the petrol had upset our flying time-table, so that we were obliged to spend the night in Akyab harbour. This is the last port on the Bay of Bengal, and it looked to me as if that malevolent stretch of water were having one final bout with me.

The harbour-master gave us due warning that we might expect trouble, and offered to do what he could to help us if we required assistance. He regretted his inability to let us have a more sheltered place in the harbour; but Akyab harbour stood open to three points of the compass.

Offers of help were kind, but not of much use. The *Atlantis* could not be placed on the land; all we could do was to tie her firmly to her buoy with three thick-nesses of steel cables.

That was the wildest night in all my flying experience. We all three lay awake listening to the gale that raged in the pitch-black night outside; we could hear the breakers coming over the floats, wings and body of the plane. We could feel how the plane trembled in every bolt and screw. We were in our

swimming-suits, and had the light-pistols within reach. Every few minutes one of us went out to reconnoitre. fighting his way in the teeth of the gale and the stinging rain. Lightning played over the sea in a continual blaze.

At midnight it seemed as if all Hell had broken loose. The hurricane tossed the plane about, the waves hammered over it. We had to remain passive spectators – powerless to lift a finger to help our good friend in her lone fight with the elements! When the wind ceased howling for a moment, we could hear the sirens from ships in the harbour and from the land. Between the flashes of the lightning we could see the searchlights from lighthouse and ships. There was a certain measure of comfort in knowing that other human beings shared our anxieties, but it was frightful to be able to do nothing but wait.

The minutes became hours, the hours days, and the night an eternity. Then, at last, there was a glimmer of dawn, a new day was breaking and the storm moved away. The rising sun shone down on our proud seaplane, the fearful stress of the night was over, and our faithful *Atlantis* had mastered the Bay of Bengal.

CHAPTER XV

IN MEMORY OF MY COMRADE — MARGA VON ETZDORF

I VENTURE to dedicate this chapter to the memory of my comrade Marga von Etzdorf. Marga von Etzdorf was a good pilot; she was a grand pal; she was above all a great, proud human being, and her pride was her undoing.

Rangoon, 20th April, 1932, and a great bustle on the *Atlantis*: we were thorough-cleaning in honour of Marga who was expected to land about eleven o'clock. We were to act as her guard of honour, and fly over the town with her. It is not every day that two planes from the same country and the same workshop meet in a foreign land. The airwoman's one-seater sports machine was on its way home, having shown the German flag in Russia, Siberia, Manchuria, Japan and China. Our seaplane had almost finished the long flight round Asia, and would be starting in a week or two on the second big stage — the flight round Australia.

This was going to be a field-day! The whole German community was joining in the rejoicings and preparing a festive reception. At 10.30 a.m. we set out for the harbour to meet and escort our visitor who was due at eleven; there was no sign of her however, nor had she appeared by noon, so we returned disappointed to the harbour. It was difficult not to be anxious as to the fate of our compatriot. The

flight from Bangkok to Rangoon is by no means easy: one-third over sea, one-third over primitive forest, and the rest over marshy rice-fields; we could only hope that she had not been forced to land on the way.

In the afternoon a telegram arrived, but it was made out in a code which nobody in Rangoon could decipher, and our anxiety grew. I determined to postpone my own start for another day, and to go to Bangkok to see for myself what had happened.

In the grey of the morning we were in the air again, making for Bangkok across country, by the route which would be taken by a plane flying from Bangkok to Rangoon; it was not very comfortable to fly a sea-plane over land, but a human life might be at stake, and one's own risk was a secondary consideration.

Four hours in the air brought us to our destination. All the way we had scanned the country below us hoping and fearing to see the damaged plane, but in vain. In Bangkok, where we were treated with much kindness by all and sundry, we learned the sad truth: Marga von Etzdorf had crashed two days previously when starting for Rangoon. The reasons for the accident were not known, but the plane came down in atoms and the brave airwoman only escaped by a miracle, and was now in hospital in plaster of Paris. Her injuries were comparatively light, but the doctors said that she would have to lie up for a long time.

We were deeply shocked, and went to the hospital expecting to find a woman broken in spirit as well as body. Instead, we were gaily welcomed by a smiling girl who appeared to regard her plight as a joke.

Next day I went to the hospital alone, for I was not altogether convinced that Marga had not been hiding her true feelings the day before; I was almost certain that there was something that she would have liked to say to me, although it was difficult. Now that the brave woman is dead, I may relate to-day that con-

versation by her sick-bed. There is a great deal of truth in her words; they are sure to find an echo in many hearts.

‘You know, Bertram, I am so glad that you were here in good time with your machine after my frightful accident. One can for once say all that is in one’s mind. As German flying-comrades, we are bound by a closer tie than ordinary mortals, and I can tell you some things that I have never before breathed to anybody.

‘You are familiar, in outline at least, with my flying career; you know that I started for a flight to Africa in the autumn of 1930, and was successful. On the return-flight, near the end, I was forced to land at Catania in Sicily, and had to return to Germany without my aeroplane. You know what that means: to start on a long flight after immense preparations and with the highest hopes; to do one’s best, and then one day to be unlucky and lose one’s plane – as you did, too, in the Bay of Bengal – and to have to come home without it.

‘One knows one has done one’s best; is conscious of no fault – it is just sheer bad luck – yet one has the feeling that people at home are sitting in judgment on one, and criticising. It’s like this: if everything goes well on a long-distance flight, and one returns safe and sound again with one’s plane, lots of people are ready to belittle what one has done: to say that the flight was not after all much of an achievement. But if one crashes, then the wise folk at home shake their heads, and go as far as to say that they could have foretold this, and that the flight could not in any possible circumstances have succeeded. But what do such people know of our work, our anxieties, our ideals? They sit in their comfortable chairs and read in the papers about our flying achievements, and they have not the faintest idea of what lay behind these

achievements. It is not that we want to be praised to the skies, but we do ask for recognition, and adverse criticism is bound to sadden us.

'When I had my first crash, I was able to master my pride, and start out with my new Junkers machine for a flight to Japan through Russia, Siberia and Manchuria. I covered the distance in twelve days, my daily performance being some 630 miles, and I am justly proud of that. Diplomatic bothers in the East kept me for some months in Japan, but at last, a fortnight ago, I was able to leave southern China for Bangkok via Indo-China: I wanted to get back to Germany by the quickest route. And now my plane is lying smashed in a corner of the aerodrome and I am lying in bed in plaster of Paris, with broken bones. When I think about it, and picture two or three so-called 'good pals' who will, as likely as not, smile at my bad luck, I am tempted to do something desperate. My pride gets up in arms, I don't want to go home again, but to make an end of everything out here.'

These words made a deep impression on me. I could not deny their tragic truth; I knew it from my own experience. I make no accusations, but there is one thing I could find it in my heart to desire in the future for aviation, and that is more *esprit de corps*, more real sympathy with one's fellows in good and evil fortune. Aviation is so much greater a thing than anything hitherto attained, that nothing petty should be associated with it. Some proud pilot has said:

'Seeing that you risk your life with every flight, the best aeroplane material is just good enough.' That is true, and I would add: 'Seeing you risk your life with every flight, the best sense of fellowship is just good enough.' The greatest achievements spring from the firm foundation-stone of a noble spirit of brotherhood.



Rangoon



The seaplane on the river outside Palembang

I spent many hours by the sick-bed in Bangkok, and I was able to encourage Fraulein von Etzdorf. I promised her to return from Australia with my machine in three or four weeks, and then it would be an honour for me to offer her a place on the *Atlantis* on the return flight to Germany, via China, Japan and North America. My offer was gratefully accepted, but fate willed otherwise. No one then knew that a short time later I should myself be compelled to make a forced landing with my aircraftman Klausmann, on the coast of Australia, and that nothing would be heard of us for fifty-three days. Thus it was that Marga von Etzdorf waited in vain for us for many weeks, and finally, when the whole world believed us dead, gave up hope of our return and went back herself to Germany – once more without her aeroplane!

And yet again this intrepid airwoman made plans for a long-distance flight. On the 27th May, 1933, she started for Australia. In two days she did the stretch across Europe and Asia Minor to Aleppo, and there on the landing-ground, fate stepped in again: her machine was smashed when landing on the evening of 28th May, 1933. If any excuse be needed, I can assure you that the Aleppo flying-ground is far from ideal; that the wind and ground conditions are wretched; and that an unlucky combination of small chances is all that is required to make one smash one's machine in the twinkling of an eye.

Marga von Etzdorf climbed out of the ruins of her machine, herself apparently unscathed; in reality, however, everything was now finished for her. She had lost her machine for the third time; she could not go home beaten again. I know what someone said to the airwoman on the eve of her departure from Berlin: 'See now that you bring your aeroplane home safely this time,' and that remark of a small-minded

individual drummed more loudly in the ears of the flyer than the sound of the motor; those heartless words left that proud nature no possibility of a return home. She had had enough; she could not reconcile herself to her unhappy fate, and she therefore took her own life. Marga von Etzdorf, a great-hearted woman, came to grief on her own pride, and the only way we can honour our comrade is in realising the portion of blame that falls to our share, and in being greater through her sacrifice.

CHAPTER XVI

EQUATOR BAPTISM AND SOUTH SEA FLIGHT – THEN START FOR DESTRUCTION

EQUATOR baptism on board the seaplane *Atlantis*. Neptune had no time, nor was it worth his while to climb up to our plane that day, seeing there was only one person on board travelling for the first time from the northern to the southern hemisphere. Of course the baptism would have to be carried out with all due formality, otherwise the sea-god's wrath would pursue us. Klausmann was the child to be baptised; he was the only one of us who had not already crossed the line. Lagorio represented Neptune, and I was the barber who would lather and shave Klausmann when flying over the equator. Lagorio made his preparations in the cabin, fetched a razor, and got the lather ready in a soap-dish. Klausmann had to remain seated at the controls; he could move neither hand nor foot; he could not defend himself – which was a good thing. You may imagine that a shave during flight is not a very gentle performance, that the poor wretch's mouth and nose got more soap than his beard and that, finally, my razor strayed into the hairs of his head.

At any rate we carried out the Equatorial baptism in the most approved way and even allowed ourselves a dram to celebrate the occasion – a thing that is absolutely against the regulations. Now we were really in the southern hemisphere, and our spirits

soared. We had done it! We had flown round Asia. Half an hour ago we left the south-easterly point of the Asiatic continent, Singapore was the last port in Asia. We recognised with gratitude our indebtedness to our *Atlantis*. She had covered in all a distance of 12,500 miles, often in the most difficult circumstances. She had kept going in ice, snow and fog, in sand and monsoon-gale. What might we expect now? To-day we should be landing in Sumatra, to-morrow we should fly to Java, and only then should we have a week's pause. In Java the first part of our programme would be complete, then preparations would have to be made for the second flying-stage: Java, round Australia and back to Java.

We intended during the next day or two to fly over the South Sea Islands, and to see whether we could not find ourselves some island of the blessed where we could spend our lives in sunshine and joy. There is some truth in my joke: in the South Seas there are such numbers of islands of all sizes – large, small and quite minute – that one could live for years on one of them without any government being the wiser, and without being pestered by land- or income-tax. And this tax-free, peaceful life is as idyllic and as beautiful as the South Sea itself, with its fantastic colours, its sunshine and its incomparably lovely nights.

Enthusiasm for the South Sea Islands may of course evaporate in a flight over Sumatra. Let me give you a short geographical explanation: Sumatra is the second largest island of the Dutch Indies, Holland's rich, colonial possession. Like links in a chain, the islands Sumatra, Java, Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa, Bima and Timor follow one another and form a connexion between the continents of Asia and Australia. I always pictured Sumatra as a land of impenetrable jungle, but I had no idea that the world could produce so many tree-trunks and so many creepers as

we saw on our flight over the island. For hours we flew over impenetrable primeval forest and marsh; the gigantic ocean of trees stretched as far as the horizon. It would be a good thing when we should have left this part of the world behind us without having had to land on the inhospitable tree-tops.

At last, in the seeming endlessness of the forest, there suddenly appeared some factory chimneys. These belonged to the town of Palembang, the chief town in South Sumatra, and possessing rich petroleum wells. It is a strange feeling after a flight of many hours over the jungle wilderness, to come out again over busy streets and to see motor-cars plying to and fro below one. Landing on the river outside Palembang is to be effected with caution. Year in and year out the waters drag down whole masses of vegetation; single bushes or bush-covered islets drift to sea. The river has an easy task. After a tropical shower it has only to step a trifle beyond its banks, and in a few hours it can uproot the undergrowth for miles along its banks.

The greater part of Palembang is built on stakes, as high tide is to be reckoned with every day. Living in the timber houses cannot be specially healthy, with the marsh-water flowing a few hundred yards below. I longed to get acquainted with the people living in this marshy district, and was very much surprised to meet a healthy and cheerful people. The European has, of course, only one remedy against sterile country and unhealthy climate, and that is alcohol. I trust that my friends in Palembang will not take my frankness amiss, for alcohol is a necessity of life in the Tropics — it is a preventive against malaria — moreover I can sing the praises of the flowing bowl of hospitable Palembang with any man!

Next morning we flew to Java, the most valuable island of the Dutch colony and the 'island of a hundred volcanoes'. Before we started we had to clear

the floats of the *Atlantis* of all the accumulation that had gathered on them during the night – a perfect forest! Soon the chimneys of Palembang were disappearing in the distance and the dense forest lay below us once more. The open sea was a relief to eyes and nerves. Sumatra was behind us, and I can assure you that the idea of settling there had no charms at all for me.

In the arm of the sea between Sumatra and Java we circled round Cracatao, the notoriously ill-disposed sea-volcano. A mountain rears itself out of the sea, and between the masses of grey rock forming its summit the smouldering fumes rise out of the crater. One shudders to think of the frightful power which may break forth from the open crater-mouth when the gases inside the earth have to expand. Without any special warning Cracatao begins to rage, makes the sea boil, makes the earth quake, and devours human life and luxuriant vegetation.

And now Java lay below, the terminus of the first part of my expedition. About Java I would tell you only one thing: the Javanese, is, in my opinion, the best hydraulic engineer anywhere to be found. Almost every mountain and hill is laid out like an amphitheatre; the rice-fields lie one below the other, like steps in a staircase. Fortunately there is no shortage of water on the island: the wet monsoon season sees to that all right! But this water would flow to the sea just as quickly as it has come out of the clouds, if the Javanese did not diligently and perseveringly make each drop of water do the work of ten and even twenty! The mountain-stream is accurately divided by sluices, and distributed round the hill through canals. It flows on to the highest of the rice-fields, waters it to the required depth, and then flows on to the next, lower one. The rice-fields descend, step by step, right down to the plain, and twice – or perhaps

thrice — a year they yield a good crop, and make of Java a Paradise of work and well being.

Then came the landing in Batavia, and the end of the first part of my expedition. After Batavia the organisation of the second big flying-stage came into force. My plans were as follows: my machine was to be the first German seaplane to fly to Australia. It was to fly round the fifth continent, bringing greetings from home to the many Germans there, and showing to friendly Australia a good specimen of the German aviation industry. We should find fewer suitable harbours for landing on the Australian coast, and would therefore have to fly longer stages without intermediate descent. A plane has unfortunately a limited flying weight, so if we meant to accomplish the longer flying stages, the extra fuel required would prohibit the carriage of unnecessary ballast. For this reason I decided to leave behind in Java my two colleagues Lagorio and Thom, with all the film-apparatus and the unnecessary baggage. I was to fly alone with Klausmann in — we hoped — fourteen days, round Australia, then return to Java, and from that point continue the flight with the entire crew over the same route as we had just come by: Palembang Singapore, Bangkok, on to China.

You are doubtless surprised that I have told you nothing of the last few flying-days: of the temple-town of Rangoon, of Siam, of the interesting coast of Burmah or of Singapore, the gateway into the Far East, and that I only chatted briefly about the South Sea Islands. I should like very much to write more about our experiences, but at the moment I do not possess the necessary tranquillity. Something impels me to make haste in writing the book. I know what it is — we are approaching Australia, it will soon be the midnight hour between the 14th and the 15th May, 1932. In a day or two will begin our terrible time after the

forced landing on the coast of Australia, when we fought for our very lives for fifty-three days! And the nearer I approach the Australian coast in writing this book, the more vividly does memory awake in me. I cannot write anything easy or light, I cannot talk in a jocular way. I must first write an account of the hardest time in my life, and in this way unburden my soul. That is why I am flying – literally – over the experiences of the last weeks before the start for the Australian coast.

The preparations for the Australian flight were complete. Plane, motor and instruments had been carefully overhauled. On the eve of the start the companions sat together once more, said good-bye for a few weeks, enjoyed the memory of the great flight from Germany to Java, made plans for the continuation of the flight to China and America and finally back to Germany. Next morning was to see the start of the Australian flight, the start into destruction, the start into Hell!

PART II

A FIGHT OF FIFTY-THREE DAYS

CHAPTER I

THE NIGHT-FLIGHT

SOUTH Sea Island – Paradise! Only a poet could do justice to its beauties. After wandering over the world for years, to China, India, Persia, Siam and many another land, there is great danger of one's perceptions losing their first keenness, of one's eyes growing weary and failing to respond to impressions.

I write these lines in Berlin, hemmed in by the oppressive stone heaps of modern architecture, and under a cold, sunless sky. It is not easy for me in these circumstances to talk about the islands of the South Sea, about the colour-symphonies of water, beach, palm-forest and sky. But all I need do is to take out my flying-chart. A red line goes across the South Sea Archipelago: Java, Bali, Lombok, Sumbawa, Bima. Do not the very names suggest something mysterious?

13th May, on the island of Bima, and a rest-day. The *Atlantis* was lying motionless by her buoy. The bay was completely protected, shut in all round by volcanic mountains. A narrow opening in the rock connected it with the sea; it was a splendid seaplane harbour. How shall I describe our surroundings? Dark hills with rice-fields glued on to them – seemingly – native huts hidden under and behind the palm-woods, and over all a cloudless sky. A snow-white sandy beach separated this picture from its sharp

reflection in the deep blue, crystal-clear water. Thin clouds of smoke rose straight up between the palms – this was the sole movement in the great peace. There seemed to be no people about except Klausmann and myself. We were lying on the floats; from time to time, one of us flopped into the water, lay on his back and drifted. We were much too tired to swim. When we left the water, we lay on our backs on the wings, letting the sun scorch us. The tropical sun could do nothing further to us: we were already burnt black – outwardly we were negroes!

In the stillness we became aware of a soft, splashing sound, most likely a fishing-boat passing by. I was much too lazy even to open my eyes and continued to doze.

‘Hallo, you fellows, what are you doing here?’

I nearly fell into the water with shock, and I jumped to my feet. The boat was approaching us, two natives were rowing, and standing in the boat was a – what was he? native, white man or pirate?

‘Is one permitted to come on board? You must tell me something about old Berlin!’

He spoke German! I did not know of any white man living in the South Sea Islands, and here I was meeting a compatriot – a Berliner at that!

‘I have brought something with me, coffee and Berlin pancakes!’

‘Come up, for goodness’ sake!’

It was Klausmann who said that. He had wakened up and taken in the situation more quickly than I, when he heard about the pancakes. So the Berlin pirate – for I am quite convinced to this day that he was a pirate – came up.

Afternoon coffee on the wing of a seaplane in the South Seas! We were grand that day: a towel for tablecloth and coffee handed round in the thermos-flask; then there were pancakes and a good Havana,

but, most wonderful of all, our visitor from Berlin. The whole thing seemed as improbable as one of the visitor's own yarns.

'How did I come here? Why, just by boat, three years ago, from Europe to Java. What am I doing here? At this moment my own boat is lying up for repairs. I got tired of Europe and her old games, and in Java I spent my last penny having a boat built. Ever since, I have been cruising about among the islands; I have two or three native helpers – grand business!'

He munched his pancakes contentedly, telling the most amazing tales about storms, about fights with every imaginable wild beast, and getting quite intoxicated with his own eloquence.

'But best of all are the nights! Have you ever flown through a night in the South Seas yet? No? Quite the most perfect thing in the world.' Then, almost angrily: 'You simply must do a night-flight; you will never have such a chance again.'

He continued in this strain for hours, until our heads buzzed with all the wonders retailed by the fanciful young man from Berlin. He was rather disappointed to find no whisky on board. He did not understand that alcohol is forbidden.

'That can never be the case with me,' he assured us, 'even if I do not happen to have any Berlin pale beer, there is always some sort of brew to be had. You should have some with you; you are bound to need it in the long run.'

With a shake of his head he took leave of us, sending greetings to Berlin: 'It was not too bad at times in old Berlin, but the Wansee is not the South Sea – not by a long chalk.'

Night had fallen, after a very short period of dusk, and the first stars were out. I was still lying on the

wing of the plane staring into the night. I seemed to have something on my mind, something connected with the visit of that afternoon.

'It is a fact that we have not yet flown through a night in the South Sea.'

That was it! That was the thought that kept coming back and nagging me.

'It really must be marvellous,' said Klausmann. He was lying beside me; we were thinking about the same thing.

'Nonsense! In the first place to-day is the thirteenth, so no flight will take place, and for another thing we have no weather report.'

'It need not be to-night. To-morrow we shall fly a day's stage, get a weather report, and then we can fly the next night.'

That would do splendidly. To-morrow we should fly on through the archipelago to Kupang and the island of Timor. Then Timor Sea would be before us, a 500-mile expanse of water. By flying over it in the night we might reach the Australian coast in the early hours of the morning. It would be wonderful to land on the fifth continent at sunrise.

We made up our minds to do this. On the morrow we should do a night-flight. We did not know that the morrow was to be the prelude to a terrible tragedy. In deciding to fly by night we ourselves gave a push to the wheel of destiny, and it rolled on its way, dragging us to destruction.

The sea was restless, and we had to be very careful over the tanking. The heavy tank-boats knocked against the floats. Then the petrol tins were rusty and difficult to open, and the natives worked with painful slowness—in fact, the whole business was wretched, and indeed this 14th of May seemed to have been an unlucky day for us. In the morning in Bima

we made three unsuccessful attempts to start, finally discovering that one of the floats was leaking. It had to be taken off and calked, so that when the flight did actually begin it was about noon. We headed for Timor, precious time had been lost, and it was already growing dark when we came in sight of the island.

In the unprotected harbour of Kupang there was a heavy swell – more trouble! I had to land farther south in a more sheltered bay, which was, however, ten miles from the port. It took hours for the boat to come alongside with the petrol. It was already night, and as we were starting at midnight exactly, sleep was not to be thought of.

‘Why do you want to be in such a hurry? Why not wait here for a few days and have a look at the lovely island of Timor?’ asked a reporter who came alongside with the petrol-boat.

There was something in what he said. One literally flew over the beauties of the world, got a bird’s-eye view of a new country for a few minutes, and then flew on again.

‘We’ll do that when we come back. We are hoping to fly round Australia in three weeks, and then return the same way through the South Sea and on to China. We are flying over to the Australian coast to-night.’

The newspaper-man was thrilled; for him a night-flight was a sensation. Reporters are the same all the world over, whether you meet them in Berlin, New York or the South Seas.

The tanks had been filled by 10.30 p.m. We had petrol to last us for seven and a half hours of flight. We could reach Port Darwin, our destination on the Australian coast, in five and a half hours, so that we had a reserve for two hours. I had intended adding to our stock of provisions in Kupang before flying over the Timor Sea, but seeing that the business of filling the tanks took so long, I could not go to the

town to buy food. We should have to be content with a couple of bananas which the press-representative gave us. They would do for the night, and on the following morning we should, of course, have a good breakfast in Port Darwin – so we imagined.

‘Good luck and take care of yourselves,’ came the shout from the boat before it disappeared in the darkness.

It is difficult to remember what we thought about during the hours before the start, but I know we were excited and looking forward to something quite out of the ordinary.

At 11.30 p.m. work began, at 11.45 the anchor was hauled in, at 11.50 the motor was running, and on the stroke of midnight I accelerated for the start.

The motor sounded strangely discordant in the peace of the South Sea night. The machine leapt up over the water and then, gathering speed all the time, rushed on into the darkness – we were flying. Under us was the sea with the silver sheen of the moon on it, and the dark woods of Timor Island; over us was the glitter of stars – infinity.

We were making for Port Darwin at a height of about 900 feet. Behind us lay Timor, before us the sea – an expanse of 500 miles. The sky was almost cloudless, except for a few ragged clouds in the south. Strangely enough, after a few minutes those clouds were decidedly bigger. It seemed impossible that we should have bad weather, for during the last few days the sky had been cloudless, and the evening reports were also very good.

At 12.45 a.m. ahead of us as we flew was a great, unbroken bank of cloud. To fly round it was out of the question – it would have taken hours. We should have to climb, get up above the clouds if we wanted to see the moonlight or the starry sky. The machine did the climb well: 4,500, 6,000 feet. It was bitterly



Java



"Atlantis" flying to Australia

cold, and we were wearing the flying-clothes for a tropical flight: leather jacket, shorts, stockings and shoes. Who would have thought of our being cold in the Tropics after the way the sun all but shrivelled us up in the flight round Asia? Klausmann went into the cabin and put on a bathing-wrap. I could not leave the controls.

When we were 7,500 feet up, the cloud-bank, now close upon us, was still higher. In order to gain height I flew in a great curve, but precious time was lost and no advantage gained. I had to penetrate the clouds – nothing for it but blind flight!

I examined the instruments carefully; they were all working. Next moment it was quite dark round us, we were flying blind, our eyes glued to the artificial horizon.

I continued to climb, trying to get up through the clouds. By 1.30 a.m. the height was 9,000 or 9,600 feet, and the highest edge of cloud had not yet been reached. Our limbs were stiff with cold, it would not be possible for us to remain much longer at this altitude.

Shortly before 2 a.m. we were 10,200 feet up, still flying by the instruments, but now at the end of our resistance against the cold. We had to descend, we had to have bodily warmth if we were to be able to fight on against gale and darkness.

I descended cautiously in order to pierce the clouds down below. It was to be hoped that the lower edge of cloud was not close above the sea, for it would be quite dark under it – no light from moon or stars could penetrate. The plane was being wildly tossed about in the strong gale whose direction I was unable to ascertain. With no sight of stars or water-surface we could not tell how far the machine had drifted, nor the direction of the wind. For the time being, however, all my energies were directed to keeping the

machine to its course until the morning dawned, and I had to continue obeying the instruments.

3,000 feet, 1,500 feet, 1,200 feet, 900 feet – the clouds descended right down to the sea. We dared not fly lower, for I was not certain of my altitude-gauge being quite exact. We might possibly be flying only a few feet above the inky black sea. But what seemed to us all important for the time being was that our limbs could move again. We eagerly watched the slow passage of the time; the first streak of dawn would appear at 5.20 a.m., and then this fight would be over. We divided the duties of the flight between us. Klausmann held to the compass-course and I went on flying by the instruments.

There was a terrible moment about three o'clock. We were over-tired, and the monotonous drone of the motor was like a lullaby. We very nearly nodded off at one point. But with a jerk we were wide awake again as the aircraft reared. Should it have slipped out of control at this height, it would have meant the end – we should have been dashed on to the water.

The struggle against sleep was almost harder than the struggle against darkness and storm. The hands of the clock seemed scarcely to move at all. What sort of thoughts went through my brain during those hours? It was dangerous to follow them, they led me out of reality into a dream state like an hypnotic sleep.

Towards five o'clock the darkness seemed less dense in the east than in the west. This might have been my fancy, but in any case it served to rouse me. Now it would only be a matter of minutes before the dawn broke, and soon after that the sun would rise out of the sea. Never, I think, did we two greet the sun with such joy as on that morning.

At 5.20 a.m. it was light enough to see the water, and we discovered that we had been flying only some

150 feet above an angry sea – a sea on which a landing would have been utterly impossible.

The night was over and, filled with new life and hope, we silently shook hands. I now had time to go into the cabin and leave Klausmann in charge. The main thing was to determine where exactly we were. With the first streak of daylight I recognised a strong south-easterly wind. During the night I had naturally been unable to tell the direction of the wind, but supposed it must have been the same, so we were apparently a trifle north of our course.

To balance the strong south-easter I held 20 degrees farther south. We expected to sight land at any moment. Banks of cloud in the distance deceived us repeatedly – we took them for the coast.

Six o'clock, 6.30 and still no land. We had fuel to do us until 7.20 only. Another ten minutes of strained nerves and straining eyes and with the ever-growing fear that we should not have fuel to take us to Australia, and then, at last, came the cry of relief: 'Land in the south!'

Klausmann had seen it, only a faint, yellow shimmer, but enough. We turned sharp south and approached the coast at full speed. I had no time to consider where we were; I hoped to land in the first sheltered bay, for the last drop of petrol might be used up at any minute.

At 7.15 a.m. the *Atlantis* lay anchored in face of a sand-dune. It was a close shave! Our one wish now was for a sleep, and it did not take us long to sling the hammocks. Never a thought or a care had we as to our whereabouts. The great thing was that we had found land and that the *Atlantis* was anchored in a sheltered bay. Presently we were sleeping the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST DAY IN AUSTRALIA

A SHRILL call woke us. What could be happening? We had no idea how late it was, nor how long we had been asleep. The call had brought us back to reality, and we were soon up and out of the cabin, to find the sun already high in the heavens and not a cloud anywhere in sight. The gale might have been a spectre of the night!

Once again we heard the call, and this time I saw that it came from a slim, well-built native standing about twenty yards away on the shore. He was not very elaborately dressed, and he was as black as a sloe. A loincloth, the size of one's hand, was his sole garment.

We wanted a closer view of this visitor, it might be useful to have his picture. Conversation was likely to be difficult, but what were hands for, after all? He understood my beckoning sign, and came wading out to us. He was a remarkable specimen, his long head was covered with a thick mop of frizzy hair; on his chest, back, arms and legs there were deep scars, and he had his face and hair smeared with lime and ashes.

In vain did I try to find out from him where we were, where the next town was, whether any Europeans lived near, whether he knew of a fuelling-station. He grinned uncomprehendingly, and scratched his head in embarrassment. He could give us no information, and I was glad to be rid of him,

for he had brought with him a most unpleasant gift, the plague of Australia: flies!

Here and now I would speak of the plague those creatures were to us during our 'Robinson' existence. If you ask me to-day: 'Which is the most dangerous beast of prey?' I shall answer without hesitation: 'No beast of prey can be as dangerous as the flies or mosquitoes on the north-west coast of Australia.' They buzz round in hundreds and thousands. If you speak a word or two without placing your hand before your mouth, these tormentors will go into it. They go into your nose, your ears and especially the corners of your eyes. A flick of the hand will not scare them away either: they have to be removed one by one from eyes and nose and ears. Our flying-helmets were a splendid protection for our ears, and the goggles for our eyes. At one time Klausmann broke one glass of his goggles, but he plastered the hole up, preferring to be blind in one eye rather than expose it to the flies and mosquitoes. If any part of the body is uncovered, these creatures immediately congregate on it in myriads. It is a martyrdom for the nerves. The natives of the country take no notice of the flies; their thick skin is apparently immune to their onslaughts. I must just relate an amusing and true story in this connection: When, two and a half months after our rescue, I went back to the wilderness to salve my seaplane, some friends presented me with several bottles of a famous fly-killer. They told me that I had merely to sprinkle this poison in the cabin of the plane and I should have peace – all the flies would die. I came to the plane, closed the cabin and did the sprinkling. Then I waited for results. Nothing happened, the beasts went on calmly living their lives, not troubling in the least about the poison. You see they are very special flies – abnormal like the wilderness itself.

When our visitor had left, there was a humming and a buzzing as of a beehive. We should have to leave this inhospitable spot as quickly as we could. We were beginning to feel hungry and thirsty and to think lovingly of breakfast. We had no food on board, so we should have to go to a town or a township or something before long. We could use the last of the petrol to fly along the coast.

Shortly before landing I had sketched the outline of the coast, and tried to verify the directions according to the compass. A comparison with my sea-chart which – unluckily for us – was most inaccurate, convinced me that we must be on the north coast of Melville Island. The north coast of Australia is very imperfectly surveyed, and charts made out on a large scale only. Melville Island lies north of Port Darwin, and has a diameter of only sixty kilometres – or about thirty-seven miles. On the west coast is the harbour of Port Cockburn, in my opinion only about thirty miles from where we were.

Thirty miles meant a flight of fifteen to twenty minutes, but we should have the strong east wind at our backs, and that would make us go quicker. I was firmly convinced of the correctness of my conclusions. The anchor was quickly picked up, the motor started, and next moment the machine was flying out of the sheltered creek, and along the coast towards the west.

We had put the petrol-taps on to the reserve tank, so that all the fuel might be pumped into the one tank, and we might utilise it to the last drop. There were fifteen litres in the reserve when we started. That ensured ten minutes of flight any way, and possibly there might be another thirty or forty litres distributed among the other tanks.

It is a bit of a nerve-strain when one is afraid of running short of petrol, and has to keep an eye on the

little cork which indicates in a glass on the reserve-tank the quantity still in hand. For two or three minutes after the start all was well. Then the indicator dropped. The large tanks had been drained. All that remained now was the petrol in the reserve-tank. It might just do, however, seeing that we had the wind behind us.

Rather uneasily we watched the coast for settlements, and tried to determine the situation of Port Cockburn. There was a further drop in the petrol – we had enough for only three or four more minutes of flight. The coast, as far as we could see, was absolutely unprotected and there was a heavy swell; but it was more than time we found a sheltered creek, otherwise the plane would be coming down on the rough sea. At last, just below us, there was a small creek running a good way into the land, and with a tiny, sandy beach in the background – an ideal seaplane harbour. Without stopping to think, I turned off the engine and allowed the aircraft to descend; the propeller gave one or two slow turns, as if it were tired, then the motor stopped. The last drop of petrol had been used.

For the second time we had made a good landing on Australian soil. Nothing could harm the machine in that sheltered bay; we had no cause for anxiety on that score. But with this landing began the frightful period of fifty-three days on the north-west coast of Australia.

I do not believe we realised after landing what it meant to have landed on an uninhabited coast. We did, it is true, feel the first pangs of hunger and thirst, and there was also a feeling of uncertainty as to what was to come next. Our nerves were slightly overstrained after the night-flight and the flight over the wild, open sea with no sight of land. That must

be the explanation of our over-hasty decisions during the first hours and days.

'The first thing to do is to fetch a canister of water,' said Klausmann; 'there is sure to be a spring in the creek.'

We were quite positive about this, and thought that we had only to look about for a few minutes to find fresh water. How could we imagine that it would take days – weeks even – before we found a pool?

After two hours of vain search, however, we began to realise the seriousness of our plight. Everything here was arid, dried up, dead. Grass and bush were burnt up. One sign of life we saw on our wanderings that day, and that was our first kangaroo. He could not live without water; was bound to know where it was to be found among the rocks, away from the sun. But we were no nature-men, we were incapable of living in the wilds and following a trail that might lead to food and drink.

In this vain hunt for water our thirst became more and more insistent; hunger was forgotten for the time being, our lips and gums were parched. It was stiflingly hot, and the sea-air salt – we simply had to have something to drink.

'How about the water in the cooler?'

We went back to the plane, and filled a beaker with the dirty, oily water from the cooler. One gulp and we spat it out again; we were apparently not yet thirsty enough to stomach it. Being civilised, we were still rather sensitive about dirt.

'We shall have to push on as quickly as we can, and come to people who will give us food and drink. We shall follow the coast and walk as long as our strength holds out.'

In those early days after the forced landing we imagined that the human body could exist for only a few days without sustenance. We were in an agony

lest we should not turn those days to account. Without pausing to deliberate – we were in too nervy a condition for that – we packed a few necessities into a bag, hastily anchored the machine, oiled the motor, covered the pilot's seat, and abandoned our good *Atlantis* almost at the double! We conceived the strange project of walking through the night and all next day along the coast back to the native whom we had seen when first we landed on Australian soil. Everything turned on the one thought: that the man must have water – the only thing we wanted at the moment.

That evening did not see us far on our way; after 200 to 300 yards we found ourselves at a creek which ran a long way up into the land. To walk round it would take hours. Apparently the water was not deep, so we proposed to wade through it. I had the baggage on my shoulder at the time. Klausmann was to make the attempt to reach the opposite bank first. He was already in the water. With a shout of alarm he jumped back; it was all swamp and marsh, we could not possibly make a way through. The slime would hold us fast and drag us down.

It is a strange fact that came home to me very clearly during that time when we were lost to the outer world: the greater the difficulties the calmer our nerves became, and the more methodically did we seek for a way back to civilisation and life.

It was so that evening, as we told each other with perfect coolness that any rash step was dangerous. We had first of all to get a good night's sleep, to recover from the exertions of the flight, then, with our brains clear, we could consider the chances of rescue. We went back to the plane, slung the hammocks and were soon having our first night's sleep on Australian ground.

CHAPTER III

WATER-FAMINE AND CROCODILES

TWO and a half months had passed since we departed from Germany. We had been eighty days on the way, and slept fifty to sixty nights in the cabin of the seaplane. In the mornings, when we left our hammocks, and came out on to the wing, we had always had the wonderful feeling of being in a new and strange country. We used to tell ourselves that we had awakened in Persia, India, Burmah or Sumatra. Those mornings on board the *Atlantis*, with the machine gently rocking in a great world-port or in a sheltered bay on the Asiatic coast, would always be a treasured memory for us.

This morning we woke up as usual at five o'clock. We were accustomed to getting up as soon as the first light showed, and we dressed and had breakfast over usually before sunrise, afterwards preparing the *Atlantis* for the start.

So the first light of day roused us this morning also. We stumbled sleepily out of the cabin, on to the wing, and prepared to do our usual morning's work. I tried to remember what the next flying-stage was to be; then came the chill realisation – to-day we shall have no breakfast; to-day we cannot prepare for a start; to-day we cannot fly. . . .

It was absurd, when one came to think of it, that everything depended on a few gallons of fuel. Only a

little petrol, of which there were endless quantities in the world, and our forced landing would have been a dream.

‘Perhaps there may be a few drops left in the different tanks, perhaps the petrol-pump did not draw it all into the reserve-tank.’

We went to have a look at once. The draining-tap under the body of the plane was turned on, an empty film-case held expectantly under it, and our theory seemed to be correct. A thick jet flowed into the case. If only the petrol would continue to flow like this for one minute, we should have enough to fly for another thirty miles.

Fate seemed to be mocking us, however, for after two or three seconds the miracle came to an end; only three or four litres had flowed out. Vainly we turned the taps on the different tanks, not a drop was left. That meant that we could not fly any farther, that we should have to seek some other way back to civilisation. The fight was beginning.

It is impossible to chronicle all the details of our life during the fifty-three days, but every minute of that endlessly long time was a fight.

Our first wish was to find water, and that decided us to go and look for the native whom we had seen when we landed first – the native from whom we had fled in disgust now meant salvation to us, because he had water! A walk of twenty or twenty-five miles along the coast would bring us to him.

Once again we prepared for the long journey on foot, but to-day with more method. We took care not to overload ourselves, but to take only the barest necessities: pistol, water-bag, cards, cigarettes, matches. The machine was anchored again. My good *Atlantis* who had carried us through all perils, and served us so faithfully, could help us no more. We would now

help her by bringing petrol for her empty tanks – that was what we thought.

We would walk round the morass which the day before had seemed so impassable to us, and then head for the wilderness.

Would you care for a short description of this inhospitable north-west coast of Australia?

It is a fearsome land; I have never seen its like on any of my wanderings. We had to climb over steep rocks and sharp-edged, smooth slabs of stone, so enormous that they might have been flung about by some giant hand. Then the marsh and the Bush; tough, razor-edged grass, man-high, barred our way. Every step was a fight, and over us was the cruel heat of the tropical sun. We progressed very slowly, clambering over the rocks, avoiding the precipices, and with untold difficulty making our way through the Bush.

Towards noon we had a terrible happening: among the plane's equipment was a water-bag which could hold nine litres. It was a porous, linen sack; the drops oozed through the outer texture, and evaporated in the surrounding air, and in this way the water in the sack was cooled. When flying over the Syrian desert, in the Tropics, in the flight round Asia, and in the South Sea, this water-bag always provided us with fresh, cool water. Before leaving the *Atlantis* on this occasion we had filled the bag with the water from the motor-cooler, and sprinkled in a dash of mouth-wash to disguise the taste of the oil. Now the water-bag which had served us for two and a half months was leaking; a sharp stone had torn it, and its precious contents were spilt on the sand. Yesterday this oily water had sickened us, to-day its loss seemed a sheer calamity!

'Shall we go back to the plane? There are a few litres still left in the cooler.'

‘Impossible; we must get on – no more turning back!’

And we did get on – on and on, right into the night. We rested only for a couple of hours on the smooth stones, but did not sleep, and at daybreak we were on the march again.

We had been walking for two days already, two infinitely long days, at every minute of which we hoped to find water. We had struggled on from sunrise till sunset, and even during the noonday glare. Our one idea was to get on as quickly as possible to the goal of our desires – water!

I do not know whether you have ever experienced real thirst – not the thirst that a good glass of beer or whisky can quench, but the thirst of an absolutely parched mouth. We had by this time been two days without water, and our bodies were dried up by the sun and the salt air, our tongues were swollen, and there was foam on our lips. We tramped on along the shore of an endless sea – water as far as the eye could reach, but water that we could not drink!

Hunger did not trouble us. How could we eat without having had something to moisten lips and gums? But we had to get on – and quickly, before we sank helpless, never to rise again! Behind every projecting rock we expected to find deliverance: smoke, a fishing-boat, a hut – surely there must be something? But there was nothing; again and again there was nothing! We were doing no more than three or four miles a day, although our day was fourteen to eighteen hours long.

It was already the third day. Since dawn we had been on our feet, doggedly staggering along. To talk was a sheer impossibility. We had to cover more ground. Perhaps it would be quicker if we walked in the shallow water rather than on land. We slipped and stumbled over the slimy stones of the beach.

Presently we arrived at a creek which ran very far

inland. To walk round this would mean a loss of hours. We should have to risk swimming it. Clothes and shoes were made into a bundle with the rest of the things, and tied on our backs; the pistol was put under my sun-helmet, and then with long strokes we proceeded to swim across the creek.

From the very beginning of this swim I was conscious of a feeling of apprehension, and after each stroke my eye roved over the surface of the water, on the lookout for any movement, for I quite expected that there would be sharks about. But nothing was to be seen.

Klausmann was a few yards ahead of me, and we had already swum more than half the expanse of water when I felt as if a cold hand were gripping the back of my neck. Some danger behind! I looked back. The surface of the water, about forty yards away, was disturbed at several points. At first I could not distinguish anything, then I thought I saw tree-trunks drifting on the water, and then I recognised – crocodiles! Two – three – more. They were swimming after us, gaining on us!

For a moment my limbs seemed paralysed. Then I began to fight for my life. I shouted to my companion. In no time the bundle was off my shoulders; clothes and shoes disappeared in the water, but I had not a thought for them. In mortal terror we swam for all we were worth, making for the land which was still thirty or forty yards off.

It is impossible to describe the thoughts which went through my brain during those seconds. Certain death behind, deliverance ahead – but far away. I wanted to look back every moment, but that would have meant a loss of time. We had nerve enough only to go on swimming, racing through the water. Klausmann reached the shore first. That good friend did not rush on, he waited for me, and presently I too had

the solid ground beneath my feet. We waded, crawled, leapt a few yards farther. Then, completely exhausted, we lay down on the sand, saved – but with all our possessions lost! We were now naked and barefoot.

CHAPTER IV

THE MOST FRIGHTFUL NIGHT OF OUR LIVES

WE lay silent for half an hour, reviewing our frightful situation. There we were on that wild coast of Australia without food or water, and in addition to that, now naked and barefoot. All that we had saved were the pistol, the sun-helmets and the scarves.

What were we to do now? It would take us quite three or four days to get to the native, and could we be sure of finding the man? He might have gone hunting inland.

Our thoughts became calmer. We had to weigh everything up. It was a question now of life and death. Could we possibly go on much longer without water? Could we go barefoot through the Bush? It was impossible to contemplate enduring this agony of thirst much longer, if we did not know for certain where and when water was to be had. Uncertainty would soon play havoc with our nerves, and most assuredly lead to madness. I carefully analysed the possibility of imminent madness, and found the only way of escape: it was to go back to the plane. There was water in the cooler of the motor.

We humans require a strong will to fight our way through life, and with all our strength we should never be successful, if we had not the goal ever before our eyes.

Up to the time of our return to the plane, we had been seven days without a drop of water. Seven days

in the wilds – the last four naked and barefoot, and our bodies and feet lacerated and covered with suppurating wounds. Every step on the sharp little stones or over the razor-edged grass was a martyrdom – still we did not go mad, simply because we had a goal ahead of us: the cooler in the plane.

We wheeled right about to go back the way we had come, that most frightful of all ways. We went inland, far from the coast; I dreaded every creek, imagining I saw crocodiles everywhere.

During the hottest hours we crouched among the rocks. There – a rustling! Steps? No, bounds – a kangaroo had come and settled not ten yards from us.

Did I think of the brute's flesh? I did not. It was its blood I wanted. The pistol was loaded; I took aim and fired a shot. With long bounds the animal made off, quite unharmed, while I sat transfixed and inwardly writhing with pain and horror. I had not had the strength to withstand the recoil of the shot, and the pistol had made a deep wound under my right eye. For a moment I wondered, with a strange detachment, whether I had lost the eye. I had not, as it happened: the wound was not at all serious. Presently another thought came: 'One could easily put an end to this torture.' Did one of us give utterance to it? We gazed at each other in horror. Then I got up and flung the pistol far out to sea.

Later I frequently reproached myself for having thrown away our only weapon. It is easy to criticise my action now, from the angle of a comfortable easy-chair, but at that time I do not think that we could have lived through the fifty-three horrible days, if we had had within reach the temptation of a swift death.

On we went, tottering, crawling, for hours and hours, our legs and bodies full of sores, and tormented by flies.

Night came and we wearily sought for some place in which to take shelter from the cold which always became intense with the going down of the sun. There was nothing here that could offer us protection nothing but rocks and sand, and we had to keep warm somehow.

Then came the most awful night of our lives – the night that very nearly drove us to madness.

In order to get some protection from the cold, it occurred to us to dig a hole in the sand, and to lie down in it, covering ourselves over with the sand, in other words, we had to bury ourselves. At first the sand gave us a feeling of warmth; our bodies were almost covered, only the faces left bare and over these we put scarves and sun-helmets.

But then came the realisation of a terrible fact: that we had always to have one arm uncovered. When the right arm had thrown the sand over body and legs, it was itself bound to remain out in the cold, and the mosquitoes settled on it in hundreds and thousands.

It nearly drove us demented to lie there motionless, our bodies covered with the sand, and our right arms outside, all but devoured by the insects.

We endured this torment for hours, waiting and longing for the morning. No sleep came our way, of course. Finally, our nerves could stand no more of it; we threw the sand off, and raced frantically about, waving our arms, and trying to shake off the mosquitoes. It was impossible: the brutes settled on our bodies, in our sores, there was no escape from them. We had to go back to our sandy graves.

Then came a little nerve-test. It was not necessary for both of us to have the right arm out. One might be completely protected if the other covered him up.

For minutes we implored each other; we had not the courage voluntarily to make this sacrifice even for

friendship! The agony and the nerve-strain were too great.

But tranquillity returned. I found it in thoughts of my mother whose scarf I was wearing. My nerves became strong enough to endure the night even if my right arm were stung to a shapeless mass of flesh.

I carefully covered my companion, and lay down again in my 'grave' with myriads of mosquitoes on my right arm!

I need not say more of this night of torment except that we survived it, and tramped away again next morning, and that we managed to drag ourselves for another four days without water.

Then the creek of the forced-landing was before us; in the distance we saw our plane. You can understand what joy we felt in seeing again our *Atlantis*, the friend who had carried us all the long way round Asia! But do you know that, great as was our joy, it took second place to our longing for water?

We raced the last hundred yards, forgetting the pain of our feet, forgetting everything but this one overmastering desire – water. At last we had it, and only then did we pray.

CHAPTER V

A SAILING-BOAT, A FISH AND A SHOWER

FRESH linen, warm suits, blankets in the hammock, the cabin tightly shut against the mosquitoes, a cup of water, a cigarette – and two happy men!

We were back once more in our plane. 'We wanted to help you, to find petrol for your empty tanks, *Atlantis*, but we failed. The help came from you, and will continue to come from you, and all we can give you is our gratitude.'

We had wandered for seven days in the wilds without water. We had gone away strong and hopeful, we returned naked and despairing, weak and parched for water and with feet and bodies torn and lacerated. It was good to be back again, to rest in our hammocks and to feel at peace, and now we set ourselves to consider any possible chances of rescue.

There did not appear to be much hope of our being rescued by the outside world: if people had been searching for us, they would surely have sent a plane ere this. It was a severe disappointment that our friends had apparently forgotten us, but perhaps it was better so. If we had been idly waiting and looking for help from outside, despair might have made us its prey. But we knew that we had to help ourselves, and that we had to fight for our lives. This consciousness of utter dependence on our own efforts made us strong.

The one thing to be avoided this time was a too

hasty decision: the ways of rescue had to be considered calmly. Were we to remain passively in the plane, waiting for the very faint chance of help from outside? Impossible. We still had three or four litres of water in the cooler. Even with the most rigorous economy – we were allowing ourselves half a cup in the morning and half a cup in the evening – this stock would be exhausted in six or seven days. And what then? No – we should have to set out once more on the hunt for water.

In our seven days' march we had explored eight or nine miles of the coast in an easterly direction to no purpose. We would next try the western side. I still maintained that we were on an island. We were bound to come to Port Cockburn, if we kept on far enough west. The diameter of the island was scarcely forty miles, so the west coast could not be impossibly out of reach.

But how were we to get there? To go on foot was out of the question. We did not dare put a further strain on our poor, torn feet. Nor could we carry any heavy baggage. However, there was one solution, and it appeared both simple and safe:

We would make one of the floats of the seaplane into a sailing-boat, set up a mast and make some sort of sails and rudder. Then we could take our things with us and, above all, pour the cooler-water into one of the water-tight chambers of the float. We would sail along the coast without any special exhaustion, doing about twelve miles daily.

We were very happy the night we had thought out this plan. It seemed to us that we possessed everything that was worth having: water, cigarettes and hope! Hunger was just beginning to make itself felt, but our bodies were able to do without nourishment for a few days – and of course our misery was sure to end presently!

We proceeded to make an inventory of our property: when the crocodiles chased us, we lost all our store of matches and all my cash, along with my luggage. The loss of the money did not perturb me in the least, but the loss of the matches was another matter! After our return to the *Atlantis* we devised our 'patent tinder-box'. Component parts: starter-magneto of the motor, two litres of petrol, a bottle and some wadding: Directions for use – An empty medicine-bottle is filled with wadding, a few drops of petrol shaken in, the wadding absorbs the petrol, the two cables of the magneto are stuck in the neck of the bottle, the magneto is twisted a time or two, and there comes a spark between the ends of the cables which sets fire to the wadding. This tinder-box would last for years, as the petrol is used up in such minute quantities. It is a wonderful invention.

But to continue with the inventory: twelve cigars, fifty cigarettes, a small packet of tobacco and a pipe are all on board. Carefully rationed, this ought to last for weeks – and of course we should not require it to last longer than one week – so we thought at least.

This hopeful frame of mind on the evening of the seventh day after the forced landing is one of my happiest memories of our fifty-three days in Australia. To celebrate the occasion we smoked one cigar and two cigarettes. Needless to say, it was depressing to know that our dear ones at home, our friends and indeed all the world would be troubled about our fate, that they might indeed have given us up as lost. However, we hoped to be rescued in a very few days, and great would be the joy when our first telegrams were sent off! We sat yarning about home until late in the night.

Our Robinson life became interesting; we had to practise self-help! We had first of all to make a sailing-

boat, and where was the sail to come from? Two bath-robcs and a pair of trousers were cut up and sewn together. Sewing-materials proper we did not possess, ours having been lost in the crocodile chase, but we had string and screw-drivers. The seams were somewhat rough, it is true, however we were not competing for a white-seam prize! Side-oars and a couple of paddles were our masterpiece – concocted out of the flagpole and some sheet metal belonging to the plane. For three days our creek was turned into a shipbuilding yard; the work progressed, and we enjoyed it; but we had to make haste because hunger was weakening us. We longed for evening, when we should have our half-cup of water, a cigarette and half a cigar. We had rations for twenty days – but we should be rescued long before that.

The hardest task was to remove the float from the plane. The left wing had to be carefully propped up with *thin* tree-trunks; our *Atlantis* required careful handling, for we should be flying away on her presently. The metal float was terribly heavy, but we still had a good deal of strength left, and at last we got it off. Then the float lay in the water; sand was put in the different sections to make the boat watertight. The mast – a tree-trunk from the marsh – was set up and fixed by means of leather straps and wire. Finally the sail – my own special masterpiece – was arranged, and the boat was ready to start. We intended leaving on the following morning.

During the night it was very stormy at sea – impossible to sail! This was a severe trial of patience, for we only had enough water left to last out for two more days, and there was the fear of our strength giving out.

Next day – the tenth since our forced landing – there were two events of great importance:

On the previous evening Klausmann had come upon

a fish-hook in the tool-box. This was indeed a lucky find, for our angling outfit had been lost with so many other things when the crocodile gave chase, and we had had no success at all with safety-pins. Klausmann tried his luck with the fish-hook early next morning. For some hours nothing happened, then there was a shout of joy – a fish was wriggling on his line! It was a small fish, it's true, about the size of my hand, but a fish nevertheless, and nourishment. We took time and cooked this gift from the gods; we made a marvellous fish-soup – a real banquet! Our joy was somewhat damped by the loss of the helpful fish-hook which Klausmann in his excitement mislaid and which we never again found. It was no good cursing our luck, nor did we feel like doing so, all we felt was a great thankfulness that we had had so excellent a meal.

The second great event took place in the afternoon of the following day. The storm at sea grew worse, and black clouds massed together along the coast. It looked almost as if it might rain. Was that possible, we wondered, in the dry season? In any case, we made our preparations: the wings of the plane would have to catch the precious water for us. We tied the seam-linings – long strips of tin, used to cover the seams between the body and the wings of the plane – to the ends of the wing, and this improvised gutter would lead every drop of water into empty canisters placed in readiness to receive it.

We waited, trembling with excitement. First a drop or two came; presently it was raining in real earnest, wonderful! It rained for eight or ten minutes, and we caught twelve litres of water. That meant a supply for another twenty days – and fresh water too!

What harm could come to us now? God had helped us and He would continue to help us. Two grateful men lay in their hammocks that night.

The storm continued for two more days – days that were hard on our nerves – and then subsided. The boat was got ready, the luggage and water carefully stowed away in the compartments. Once more we carefully anchored the *Atlantis* and oiled the motor. We were certain that we should be coming back for her soon.

On the thirteenth day after the forced landing, we set the sail just as dawn broke. We started out on our terrible wanderings! The time of severest trial, the time that brought God so near to us, the time that was to mean a rebirth to us, was now beginning!

CHAPTER VI

A SHIP SAILS BY

WE were going forward once again. A good word: forward. There was hope of safety, so long as we could go forward. We intended to sail along the coast, and surely at some point see smoke, and find men, food, civilisation.

Our boat was constructed like a ship: eight bulk-heads divided the metal float into nine water-tight, closed sections. We put the fresh water in the section by the bow and our luggage: linen, shoes, tinder-box, distress pistol, cigars and cigarettes in the next one. These two sections were the objects of special care, for fear of leaks.

The next three sections were uncovered. In the first we fixed the mast; then came Klausmann's seat, and finally my own. The remaining four sections were covered again and empty. We distributed nearly 300 kg. of sand-ballast throughout the float to make the boat seaworthy – it made her heavy as well!

Our seats were so small that we could only squat on the ground with our legs crossed. The opening was just large enough for us to force our hips through. We were so near the surface of the water that we had to take care to cover the openings to our seats with the upper parts of our bodies, to prevent the sections being swamped with water. And in spite of that, the sand was wet in a few hours and we were sitting in water.

It was difficult to manage the heavy boat with the

small oars; however, in the sheltered creek, without currents or waves, we made good progress, and in ten minutes had reached the entrance.

Out in the open sea there were 'white horses'. We half thought of putting off our perilous undertaking until the weather improved, but finally decided to risk going on. Scarcely, however, were we out of the shelter of the creek than we began to drift towards the rocky shore. Oars and sail were too small; there was no holding the boat against the strong pull of the waves.

Vainly we tried to row against the current or to manipulate the sail. Slowly but steadily we were approaching the sharp-edged rocks, already we could see them emerging out of the surf. It was the work of a moment to haul down the sail; then we leapt from the boat, felt the ground under our feet, and leaned with all the weight of our bodies against the float. The first breakers were upon us.

It was a frightful situation. A few yards behind us were the jagged rocks, the heavy boat was being lifted by the waves, we were losing our footing, clinging, drifting back, being buffeted between rocks and boat.

Heaven help us!

If the float sprang a leak, everything would be lost. How could we proceed if we lost float and equipment? The precious water, the luggage, the tinder-box — they were all indispensable to us.

Back to the creek. We had to drag the boat 200 or 300 yards through the surf. Our bodies were cut and bruised, but we had to go on. We fought our way forward, yard by yard. It took us four or five hours; we were almost benumbed in the water and our remaining strength wholly used up. Two weeks without food, two weeks on the march and in the most strenuous labour, our reserves of energy were all gone. But we managed it; we came into calmer

water, and drew the float to land. The boat was saved, but we lay utterly exhausted in the shadow of the rocks.

What next? We should have to get on as quickly as we could. Did we feel despair? Only for a moment. Then we grew calmer. 'With a sea as troubled as this we shall not get out of the surf, we shall have to wait for calmer weather. Then we must not sail so near the coast, but hold out more to the open sea and as far as possible from the surf.'

And we again waited for a whole day, twenty-four endless hours. It grew calmer after that, and we were able to start. We sailed, rowed away from the coast, far out to sea – we rowed to disaster!

That sail of five days and nights on the open sea when we were rudderless, a plaything of the waves, and mad with thirst, was perhaps the most frightful time of our fifty-three days on the north-west coast of Australia.

At first everything went well. We wanted to get away from the coast and the surf, so we sailed and rowed six or seven miles out, and then in a westerly direction along the coast. In the morning – we had started about midnight – the wind was blowing more strongly and the sea was more agitated. The float became a submarine. Already the creek of the forced landing lay far behind. We had done enough for that day, felt we had better not venture farther, but look for a creek nearer the coast. Our record on the first day was about ten miles, and we hoped, if we were as successful on the two following days, that our rescue would be an accomplished fact.

The boat was turned towards the coast. We made little progress against the wind, and appeared to be going against the current as well, so we concluded that the tide was ebbing, and that when it turned, we

should be driven on to the coast. We waited five hours, six hours, and still we were no nearer land, another two hours, and the coast was decidedly less distinct. Then I knew that a merciless current was carrying us away from the land, and it became clear to me that both states of the tide – the ebb and the flow – tended to carry one away from the land on this coast.

Despairingly we crouched on our narrow seats, and said never a word; we seemed to have come to the end of our resources. The boat was tossed about wildly, the spray penetrated through our tightly-closed lips, and aggravated our burning thirst. We were unable to drink any of our fresh water, because if we had opened the compartment in which it was stored, the salt water would at once have streamed in.

The sea became wilder still, a great breaker smashed our rudder; we had no more hope of steering, but had to remain passive while the waves made a plaything of our boat. All the time we were being carried farther and farther away from the land; by the following morning we should have nothing but water all round us, sky and water – and then surely our sanity would go!

Hours went by, the sun burned pitilessly, and still the sea rose. Our boat was seaworthy, thanks to the ballast; but it staggered from side to side, and we knelt in our narrow quarters, with swollen and aching limbs – no fight left in us. On land we might have made some headway, even if we had crept; but on the sea we were absolutely powerless, the sport of waves and chance!

Then came that dreadful time, the memory of which makes me shudder even to-day:

It might have been three or four o'clock in the afternoon; the sea was a trifle less agitated, but still too rough to permit of our sailing or rowing.

‘What is that over there? Isn’t that smoke?’

And on the horizon there appeared first a plume of smoke, then a funnel and finally a ship! Was it a delusion? No!

‘A ship!’

I shouted, laughed, prayed, lost my nerve altogether. It was coming nearer, our boat was on its course, we must surely have been seen.

‘Keep calm, for goodness’ sake!’

The distress-pistol was placed in readiness, something white tied to the rudder-pole. Klausmann took up his position before the mast, flag in hand. I held the pistol.

Surely now God would help us! Rescue was in sight. The people on the ship were bound to see us: the officer on the watch would have directed his glass on us. Rescue, drink, food, a telegram to our home. The joy was too great; I shouted, I yelled. Klausmann was remarkably quiet. I understood the reason later.

Now only about a mile off! I fired the first red rocket, my comrade waved the white flag of distress. Then came a second rocket, and a third, and a fourth. That would do. They would have seen us by now, for we could see everything distinctly on board: the name of the ship even the name on the lifeboats, could be read; but we saw no sign at all of life.

What was happening? The ship was surely going to stop and turn now? Merciful Heavens! It is alongside, only 600 or 700 yards away – and then the ship sails on her way, and life passes us by!

For an eternity I was unable to grasp the fact that the ship was disappearing away on the horizon, funnel first, then smoke. I felt icily cold inside, a mortal anguish gripping my throat. How was Klausmann taking it? He was standing by the mast, automatically waving the flag, and staring after the disappearing

ship: long after it had gone he continued to stare and to wave – at the ‘white horses’, at the sky! Then he seized the white rags, huddled into his seat again, laid his head on his arms, and wept. His words, when they came, were terrible:

‘I give up hope, I’ll struggle no more. Fate can do with us what she likes. I am finished!’

Heavens! my comrade had lost his nerve, was ill. That meant the end!

CHAPTER VII

WE ROW

IT was night, with the marvellous starry sky of the South Seas arching over us. The sea had grown calmer, and the boat rocked gently with the swell. We stared into the lonely night and the endless universe. All about us was black now; the waves of the sea rose beside us like great beasts. The moon was already high; for hours we had been sitting motionless watching the gradual going down of the sun. In the West a great sheet of red appeared over the horizon — our home lay over yonder, in the direction of that fire. Presently the red turned pale and vanished, and a mist crept over the water, grey on grey. Then one bright point here and there, at first indistinct, then sparkingly clear, and finally the last glimmer of daylight had disappeared; in the dense black arch of the sky were myriads of stars, symbols of eternity.

Later the moon, rising out of the water, shed a silvery light over everything. I still sat on, neither thinking nor planning, but with something at work in me that was greater than thought. I know now that those hours were the greatest in my young life; never before had I so clearly seen into myself. I discovered myself that night; I was reborn.

The wonder of that night should not be kept to myself: all the world shall hear of it:

I was twenty-six years old; for twenty-six years I had lived a carefree life, taking each day as it came,

taking life itself for granted. I did some work; I exercised my will-power, but I relied entirely and solely on myself. Proud and self-confident I flew round the world, and I flew also to Australia – only something new came into my life then. We were cut off from everything that goes under the name of culture and civilisation, and had to struggle for life's barest necessities. We were clear-thinking men, and with brain and will we attempted to force a way out of our distresses – and now we were in a more desperate plight than ever before.

For sixteen days we had not been heard of, had had no food and no water. What was going to happen? We had left the coast far behind us, and were drifting rudderless out into the open sea. Our strength was used up; we should scarcely be able to row, and we had a water-supply for only three or four more days.

Some hours previously a ship had passed by, only a few hundred yards away from us. It seemed as if life would have none of us. Klausmann had lost his nerve since then, and was ill and broken. I had lost the comrade who was to have fought his way to rescue along with me.

Were we to lose our reason? Were we to die? We were young, we wanted to live! I wanted to return home, to fly again, to finish my task.

I gazed into the infinity of the starry sky, followed mechanically the progress of the shooting stars, and then I found the way, the only way: I prayed! Word for word, I uttered the Lord's Prayer in the silence of the night, laying our destiny in God's hands.

In that hour I discerned the simplest truth of life, the truth which we men so long seek in vain, until it reveals itself, as if a veil were removed from our eyes. And this truth which I proclaim to all the world is:

In life man needs two things: will and faith! The

most iron will breaks one day if there is no faith to back it.

It was not that I intended laying my hands in my lap for the future and giving up the struggle; but that I intended to obtain the strength necessary for my labours from a higher source of power.

And again I prayed aloud, and my comrade heard me and he prayed too. In the next twenty-five days which we spent in the wilderness before rescue came, prayer was the only help I could give Klausmann. He was suffering, growing worse every day, his nerves completely shattered. But prayer kept him going, prayer saved him from the last step of despair which would have meant the end of everything.

It must have been close on midnight when we fixed the oars. The sea had grown even calmer, almost like lead. The sail was taken down: it could not help us any longer now that the boat was rudderless. So we intended to row, to struggle on yard by yard, we had the strength for it now.

Then we rowed, stroke after stroke, without a word, each over-full of the great realisation.

From that time onwards we rowed continually for four days and nights. Who gave us the necessary strength? How were our arm-muscles holding out? Day and night we sat huddled in the small seats of the boat; the circulation was stopped in the calves of our legs in their cramped and unusual position; our legs were soon swollen and shapeless and quite without life. With our hands we helped ourselves forward to the bows, where the water was kept, when we needed a drink. Blisters formed all over our bodies, burst, and turned to suppurating sores when the dust got in.

We rowed. The sea was by that time as smooth as a mirror; there was not a breath of wind, and the sun burned down out of a cloudless sky, scorching our

bodies. In the sea-air our thirst became terrible. We still had three litres of water, and three times a day we allowed ourselves a quarter of a cup-full; in this way the water should last for four days. We drank in minute sips, making the water spin out as long as possible, pretending to ourselves that we were having a long drink. After a few minutes, however, our mouths would be dry again, our tongues swollen, and foam on our lips.

We rowed. We rested only a few hours, when the heat of the sun was unbearable. After a day and a half it was possible to see the coast more clearly and we took fresh courage, thought we should succeed after all. My comrade had become much calmer. We did not speak a word to each other for days at a time, only kept on and on rowing.

Two days and nights of it and our arms were aching; a fire burned in our breasts; our legs were quite lifeless and no longer pained us. Was the coast any nearer? Not perceptibly. Only at sunrise did we notice any difference, after a night's rowing, the outline of the rocks was more distinct than it had been the night before.

We rowed – our one thought 'the coast'. What did we expect from the land in the distance yonder? Water? Food? That was a vain hope. We had lived two weeks on that wild north-west coast of Australia, and during those two weeks we had found neither food nor water. But now something had changed. 'And now if we have to dig our way through the earth, we shall and we will come back to life, for we have the necessary strength. Only let us come back to the coast first.'

We rowed. The nights were cruelly long. When the last glimmer of day had disappeared in the west, we took a star for guide. Every hour we checked our direction with the aid of the compass and a fresh star

was taken as goal. Soon we could tell the time and we knew when the different stars set. Then the first streak of day came in the east, presently the sun. We watched for the sunrise with great longing: how far were we still from land?

We rowed. But not we ourselves: an unknown power moved our arms, stroke after stroke. Three days of it already; to-morrow the water will all have been drunk. The coast is still far off. God, merciful God, help us! The sea has been as smooth as glass for days. Not a movement on it. That must be our salvation. With anything of a sea-movement we should make no headway at all.

We rowed. Fish accompanied us, seeking protection from their foes in the shadow of our boat. For nineteen days we had had no food; there, almost within our grasp, were fish. Klausmann fixed a screw-driver to the shaft of the oar, stabbed and hit; but the weapon was too blunt, it slid off. Our eyes were greedy as they watched every movement of the fish. There was a hatred against those harmless creatures in our hearts. Presently Klausmann began to tell me about the baker or the butcher in his native town. 'He always baked good bread, there was always the best meat.' His words seemed terrible to me.

We rowed the last night, the last day. The water was all drunk. But we must not cease rowing now. Only a few hundred yards more and we should be ashore. If only we did not give in, and allow our arms to rest a minute. For if we did, they would hang down for ever more and not move again; we should drift out of reach of help, out to madness and to death.

God, mother, help us! Only a few hours more.

Klausmann was no longer looking at the land, but staring fixedly at his oar. I told him that we should do it. He pushed the oar with the upper part of his body, his arms were lifeless. But he rowed all the

same, the good lad. He sat a yard away from me, his body going back and forth like a pendulum: 'Stick it, only for a little longer, stick it.'

We rowed; stroke after stroke. Many a time in the night still I can hear that grim, monotonous rowing. It was like clock-work. Should it come to an end, all would be over with us.

The coast – land – near enough to touch! Only 100 yards away; only fifty; only ten – now, now!

The boat scraped on the sand. Our arms at last hung down at rest. We stared at each other without saying a word, crept out of the boat, stumbled, dragged ourselves forward a yard or two, then kissed that sacred soil, and prayed – and went to sleep.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MARCH INTO THE INTERIOR OF AUSTRALIA

WE slept, lay in the soft grass, and were able to stretch ourselves, it was wonderful. We had been five days on the sea, five days and nights; at no moment of that time had we been able to stretch or to lie down at all. Sleep was not to be thought of. We had rowed, and rowed without interruption.

We were now protected from the flies and mosquitoes by various articles of clothing. Our flying-helmets covered our ears, the goggles our eyes, and we tied our scarves over our faces to protect our mouths. In order to keep our hands free from the pests, we stuck them in the sleeves of our pullovers – no part of our bodies was exposed.

We lay at our ease on the ground, unable to grasp our good fortune which seemed like a dream after the terrible experiences on the sea. The starry heavens were above us again; but we did not need to take any of the stars for our guide, as we had been doing for the last five nights. That horrible time was over, gone like a nightmare.

We prayed, leaving our fate in the hands of the God who had so wonderfully preserved us, and who would surely not forsake us now, seeing He had given us the strength to row for those five days and nights. We trusted that He would rescue us.

On the following day we reclined in the shadow of

the rocks, considering calmly what our next step was to be.

We had been lost for twenty days. During all that time one fish had been our sole nourishment; on the preceding evening we had drunk our last drop of water. Our strength was exhausted, our legs swollen and shapeless, our bodies a mass of sores; but never before during those frightful twenty days, had our faith in our future, in our rescue, been so firm and confident as at that hour.

Klausmann's condition had improved somewhat: he was quiet, and for long periods wept for thankfulness that he had got away from the sea. He could not stand the monotonous drone of the surf: it made him uneasy, so we crept farther away from the beach and lay in tall grass under the shadow of a tree.

'How are we going to manage to push on?'

Walking was out of the question for the time being: we could not even stand without clinging to something. We were so weak that to stand up cost us a great effort; inch by inch we raised ourselves with the help of a rock or tree. Black shadows formed before our eyes, and we had terrible stomach-pains, almost like cramp. We should have to eat something to give our stomachs some work.

'How if we tried eating the leaves of this tree?' We had only to reach up and pluck the leaves from the tree in the shadow of which we were resting. Our jaws must have been quite surprised at the unaccustomed activity of chewing. We could not tell whether the leaves tasted good or bad: our sense of taste had left us. We went on chewing for hours, however, telling each other at the same time what good things we should eat, once we had been rescued. It was a test of nerve to speak about bread and bacon while chewing leaves!

In front of me lay a map of Australia. We had lost

our charts, but had found an old clue-map in the cabin of the *Atlantis* when we returned to her after the chase by the crocodiles. This map and a compass were our only navigation instruments. It was not much, but all the same it was encouraging to be able to read the names of towns on the map, and to tell each other that Australia was not quite uninhabited. We still believed that we were on Melville Island, north of Port Darwin. The north coast of the island was only about thirty-eight miles long; on our first day after the forced landing, we had flown twenty to twenty-five miles along the coast in a westerly direction and now we had done another eight or nine miles in the same direction by boat. The North-West Cape could not therefore be very far away. Nine miles south of the North-West Cape, on the west coast of the island, lay the seaport town of Port Cockburn, our goal ever since we landed.

After mature reflection we came to the following decision: on no account should we go by boat again. Our only possible mode of progress for the last ten or twelve miles would be walking – or even crawling! We would, of course, cut off the north-west tongue of the island, that is to say, strike inland in a south-westerly direction. In two or three days we were bound to arrive at the west coast, and then it would be merely a question of hours before we were rescued.

For the moment we could not make a start: our legs would not carry us 100 steps. But we did not dare remain there too long, because thirst had already begun to torment us again. We would give our legs one more day's rest, and only crawl up the hill in front of us to have a look round. Perhaps we should see smoke.

We crept between the rocks, advancing very slowly, perhaps 100 yards in an hour – we could not do more than that. Huge blocks of stone barred our way, forced us sideways through dense undergrowth.

Then the Bush opened up, and there lay before us – surely it was an illusion – there lay before us a pool of water quite fifty yards long by twenty broad!

A miracle!

According to what I heard months later from missionaries and natives, this basin contains water even in the dry season. Round about it rocks and thick undergrowth keep every ray of sun away, so that there is no evaporation: the foundation consists of a single, large, flat rock which does not permit of any water trickling away. The next pool of this kind, we heard, is thirty miles away inland.

Cannot you understand that at that moment, when we slipped into the water on our knees, we had to believe in a Higher Power who had led us hither? We might have passed the pool without seeing it, if we had been ten yards away. And our boat had landed at that very place on the coast: we were led to the spot through the thickest undergrowth.

And we were crouching in the water, needing only to stoop down a little and open our mouths. I could never have believed that the body was capable of absorbing so much moisture. For hours we lay there, laughing and crying for joy, and drinking. The fresh water was the best possible remedy for our swollen legs and the wounds on our bodies. We began to think that we might be able to start on our trek on the morrow.

Then, once more, we returned to the boat. We anchored it carefully, and hid the luggage in the Bush, still convinced that we should be returning in a few days from Port Cockburn, with a larger boat, to fetch float and luggage, and then proceed to the plane. Soon all our troubles would be over.

Next morning we were almost exuberant when setting off, if it had not been for the severe stomach-pains: apparently the leaves had not digested very

well. Every few yards we had to stop because of fits of giddiness. 'You stop quietly here, old float, we'll fetch you in a few days,' we told it, and we kept our word. We were back in a week, but so very differently from what we had planned!

We carried no luggage, because we did not wish to load ourselves. We tied a raincoat to a water-bag and took twenty-five to thirty litres of water with us. There was no need for us to go short of water now, although the thirty litres seemed an almost unsupportable burden. I held the compass, carefully wrapped up. We set an exact course for the south-west and began our march.

The country was wild; wild hardly describes that desert. We had to climb over rocks thirty feet high and crawl through grass as tall as ourselves; at other times we sank in burning hot sand. But we had to be on the move: a few hundred yards an hour, a very few miles a day. We expected to be advancing like this for three days, before we could see the sea again and the south-west coast of the island; then, surely, we should come upon fishermen, arrive at Port Cockburn, at civilisation, at life!

On the second day our swollen feet were a little better. We made better progress and half expected to be at our destination on the following day. The road seemed endless. We thought we could see our goal – the sea – behind every rock and every clump of greenery. But we were always mistaken, and still we went on hoping, firmly convinced that we were on the right track, and that we should soon be rescued.

Towards noon of the third day we climbed a hill; the Bush thinned out just there and the scrub receded. We stood on the southern slope of the hill, and could see quite twelve miles in front of us – and we saw the sea! We shouted, prayed, embraced, knew that we were saved.

Then came the frightful disappointment!

When our tears of joy had dried, we stared silently into the distance, and saw that the grey ocean in front of us was perfectly motionless; that no waves rose and fell on it – we saw that it was not water, but the endless, dead Bush!

CHAPTER IX

‘BACK’ ONCE MORE

I SAT on the southern slope of the hill and gazed into the distance. I had a bird's-eye view of the surrounding country right to the horizon – perhaps eighteen miles. There, in front of me, grey melting into grey, lay Hell – the Bush! At no point did any clearing cut it up: it stretched all the way to the horizon. Could such land exist in the world? On my travels I had seen many desolate parts of the world: the desert for instance, and the Persian coast. But when one saw the desert from the air, one recognised, even in that desolation of sand, an occasional sign of life – were it only a streak on the ground which lost itself in the distance; it was nevertheless a sign that a caravan had once passed that way; one saw that at some time or other life had been there. But the land now before me was dead, absolutely lifeless and dead.

So this was how the north of Australia looked. By this time we knew that we had not landed on an island; but that the storm had driven us 125 miles to the south during our night-flight. I now understood why there had been no search for us: nobody would dream that we could have been driven so far out of our course. Only very few ships would have sailed in these waters during the stormy night of our flight over the Timor Sea. And from the ship they could, it is true, have reported a severe storm, but nobody could have said

that some 600 or 900 feet above the surface of the water a strong north wind was blowing, and that it had driven the plane to the south during a blind flight. People would have searched for us; but here, on the north-west coast of the mainland of Australia nobody would ever search for us. Here we must depend on ourselves alone.

I talked, wishing to encourage myself with words; not even to myself would I confess my weakness. The map was in front of me again. North-west Australia: this part is called Kimberley; it is the size of Germany. I knew the direction of the coast where we landed, made comparisons with the map, and put a cross at the spot where we were. On the map were terms like 'unknown', 'native settlement'. Only one town was named: Wyndham. It lay on a creek which went far inland, and was 120 miles from us.

So our safety lay there, 120 miles to the east. For twenty-three days we had been battling on in the wrong direction – to the west. It was terrible to realise that we had used up our last reserves of strength on a false trail. Now I knew exactly where we ought to be making for, and now it was too late!

Of what use were the strongest will and the faith to go on if we could not command our muscles to go on working for us? In a few days our bodies would definitely be done for, even if our brains still lived. Klausmann's forces were apparently already exhausted: my good, old chum lay at my side, completely broken. He could do no more, he refused to take another step; but kept on praying and bidding a long farewell to all his dear ones.

I lay beside him, thinking. It was perfectly clear to me that I should have to think, should have to find some means of keeping my brain sound, and preventing me going mad. I maintain that a man can tell in advance that his nerves will break down, and that

his brain fights against this breakdown to the last. At that moment I commanded my brain to find a way. Prayer no longer availed: reason was too clear, pointing out the absolute impossibility of dragging a strengthless body through that wilderness. It would have been simpler if I could have talked with Klausmann, if he had persuaded me to continue the struggle. But he was done for, and I could find no words to convince him that there was still a possibility of rescue – indeed I no longer believed in the rescue myself.

The sun was setting and once again I saw my home in that fire in the west; I thought of my people, especially of my mother. A scarf made by my mother was tied round my neck. Years ago mother had given me this scarf before my first flight, when I had been admitted as pupil into a flying-school, and I never started on any flight without it.

I caught hold of the scarf and felt a shock through my body. It seemed to me that somebody spoke. I listened to that inner voice, and I heard my mother. Safety! All night long the voice talked to me, quietly, just as long ago she used to talk to me when I was sick. And the voice told me that at home they were waiting for me; told me that the whole world had given us up as dead, drowned in the Timor Sea; but that she, my mother, knew that I would come back to her one day, that I would live and fight to the finish.

Then daylight came, and the sun rose brilliantly, sparkling like gold. I still clutched the scarf, and I realised that God had given me back my strength in that desperate hour.

I sat up, said a word or two to Klausmann, and felt perfectly calm. Then I put the water-bag on my back and took the compass in my hand. We set out once more, intending to go back to the float and the water-pool: back the way we had come in the last

three days. I carried the compass in my right hand; this time it pointed north-east.

In the fifty-three days during which we were lost on the north-west coast of Australia I learnt many a lesson for life. Above all, I learnt never to give up hope, never to let my courage down, even if the blows of fate were terrible, even if I had to go back a hundred times over the road which was to lead me to my goal. Only not to give up hope, forward, ever forward! In the first days after our landing, we had walked along the coast with a definite goal before our eyes, until we could go no further, and had to return. After that, still full of confidence, we had made a sailing boat out of the float of the seaplane, and had sailed along the coast; we had seen a ship pass us by at a distance of a few hundred yards, and our boat had lost its rudder. We had to go back to the coast. Now we had tramped into the endlessness of the Australian continent, and again we had to turn back. It is very difficult to create new hope out of the word 'back'; but we were able to do it; we were given the necessary strength by a higher power.

What did we want at the coast? Why were we going back that way? It was not the way to Wyndham. No, but it was the way to the water-pool, to the boat and the luggage. After anxious consideration, there remained only one last possibility: we should try once more to sail our boat along the coast, in the direction of Wyndham, when we had made a stronger rudder. This time we should remove the greater part of the sand-ballast from the float, in order to make it lighter and more easily handled. Needless to say, we should in no case sail if there was anything of a sea on, for the boat would capsize with the smallest movement of the waves. We should sail from one creek to the next, and at night come on shore. We

could fill two sections of the float with water from the pool, and that would last us for weeks. We should have to go back to the baggage, because we had left our tinder-box with it – the magneto, the petrol and the wad. Then in the evenings we should be able to light a fire.

You know the power of a fire. The licking tongues of flame tell of life; they give warmth and hope. Our chief reason for going back to the coast, however, was that we could from there keep a lookout for any chances of rescue. We might search the horizon for smoke, for the sails of fishing-boats. There is reassurance in such a search even if it be fruitless. In the Bush we were closed in, incapable of seeing a camp-fire a bare hundred yards away. So we dragged ourselves onward, walked and crawled to the coast.

What incidents should I relate out of those days of weary plodding? How shall I make you understand that we had to crawl through the waste, that we greedily eyed the trees in search of fruit where no fruit was, that we looked for lizards on the sunny spots of the rocks? How shall you understand that we tried to catch a serpent which is certainly poisonous, because that serpent could have given us flesh? We had pains in stomach and breast, kept seeing well-spread tables before our eyes – meat and bread. Our legs moved mechanically, the hot air quivered; we thought we were seeing smoke everywhere, and traces of human beings. How can you understand that we staggered forward, that our legs moved, that our muscles worked, when there were no muscles left! But on, on; we were young, we wanted to live.

I stumbled and fell over a stone and Klausmann shouted to me: 'Be careful of the compass! We shall have to replace it in the plane when we resume the flight.' His words affected me powerfully at that



The "cockle-shell"



Cape Bernier

desperate moment: it was wonderful to know of my companion's faith in the future.

It was on the second day of the return march. We had been walking for several hours; it was very hot, and I felt like loosening my scarf a little. I put my hand up – and the scarf had gone, I had lost my mother's scarf! At that moment I felt as if all was over with me, I had no strength left. Without the scarf I could not and would not go another step. Klausmann felt about it as I did: the scarf had been the spur to our last vestiges of strength.

For hours we sought it, but we were unable to tell where exactly we had walked, and looking for the scarf in the Bush was like looking for a needle in a haystack. We hunted about in despair, and were on the point of giving up when we found it, lying under a rock where we had rested some hours previously.

I had often thanked God who had helped us in our greatest need, and had given us water, when we had been days and days without it; but I do not think that I ever felt so grateful as I did at this moment. My mother was with us again.

It took us three days to reach the coast. Once there, we began looking for the boat. According to the compass we had left the coast in a south-westerly direction and our course for the return journey was north-easterly. The Bush was everywhere the same: there were no landmarks, so we were unable to say whether the float lay east or west of us.

We went another day and a half in the wrong direction along the coast, towards the west. Then we stood on a tongue of land, and realised that we had gone astray and should have to go back. That word 'back' once more! We were growing quite accustomed to being fooled by fate; but perhaps it was only another trial, another test of our strength? It almost

goes without saying that we found the strength to crawl back the same way along the coast. We had to find the boat; this boat was our sole and our last possibility of rescue.

By this time we were going very, very slowly. Klausmann's legs were covered with open wounds. Every twenty or thirty steps we had to sit down; things went black before our eyes. Then it was always a frightful effort to stand up, and to resume the eternal onward plodding.

On the morning of the twenty-seventh day Klausmann could go no further. I had to leave my companion, and go on alone to look for the boat. It was dreadful to be alone in that waste. All round me was the uncanny stillness, interrupted only by the monotonous murmur of the sea. Were there any human beings left in the world at all? My thoughts were frequently confused, perhaps my mind was going!

Anything but that! I forced myself to think of something else, I spoke to myself; but again and again I found myself considering the possibility of losing my nerve, of going mad. I talked with my mother for hours; her scarf was firmly knotted round my neck. She called to me, I must go back to her. She could make any demand upon me.

Then at last I recognised the spot, found the water-pool near our creek, found the creek itself and the boat and the baggage. Everything was exactly as we had left it. I saw the sandy beach where we came ashore after our five days at sea; I saw the tree whose leaves we had chewed, and best of all I saw the boat, a part of our seaplane. The sea was rather rough, and although we had dragged our boat up on to the beach, it was now floating on the water. However it was firmly anchored, no harm could come to it.

After resting for a short time I returned to Klausmann. The good news which I could bring him

drove me on more quickly. I heard his voice calling me in the distance. He had been calling in utter anguish for hours. We had only been separated for a short time, but we met again as if we had not seen each other for years.

Yard by yard Klausmann dragged himself on. It was already growing dark, but we should soon be at the creek. We would sleep that night under the tree that sheltered us after our wonderful escape from the sea. The creek had almost come to represent home to us.

The sea had become very rough, there were 'white horses' on it, and the wind howled among the rocks. We felt anxious about the anchorage of our boat and made what haste we could to get to her, stumbling, falling and finally crawling over the rocks. We came to the water-pool, then to the first trees of the creek, then to the beach – and were stupefied by what we saw there – the boat had broken away from her moorings and had been thrown on the rocks!

Was this the end? We should not be able to walk any more: our legs were done for. The boat had been our last hope.

We waded through the sea and stood on the rocks. The float was being terribly mauled about, every wave lifted it and threw it down again on the jagged rocks. We grieved for it as for a live creature, this good companion on our travels.

And it was a tremendous piece of work for us, spent men as we were, to tug our float off the rocks. Some of its compartments were full of water, it threatened to sink any moment; but we succeeded at last in dragging the wreck to the beach.

Once more there seemed to be a way out of our hopeless plight. Five compartments of the float were leaking, and could not possibly be repaired, but the remaining four had suffered less. We should have to

saw through the boat and cobble as best we could the four compartments. It would not be more than a 'nutshell' then that would carry us to sea, but all the same it was a ray of hope to us.

We had taken the metal saw out of the plane toolbox with us. It would be pressed into the service without loss of time: we were growing weaker every minute.

We sawed all that night and all next day. It was like cutting our own flesh to saw away part of the plane. We could not have a sail, for the mast would make our tiny boat top-heavy, and she would capsize at the smallest wave. The oars were made fast by an arrangement of leather straps, the most necessary baggage stowed, and water put into one of the four compartments. We were ready.

On the morrow when the sun rose we would try to row along the coast in this cockleshell. We should venture out only if the water were as smooth as glass. How far should we get? The distance by coast to Wyndham was 150 miles. Would our boat be seaworthy for such a long way? Would our arms not refuse their office long before we reached our destination? We had no choice. We had to go, it was the only chance.

CHAPTER X

THE BUSH-FIRE

ON the night before our projected sail along the coast we lay under the tree that had been our first refuge when we escaped from the sea. This tree and the grass and rocks near it now seemed our friends – the only home we knew, and we wondered how we should fare on the morrow when we left them, and took our last, desperate chance in the cockleshell of a boat. It was twenty-eight days since our forced landing – a long time to have been without food – and the ache of hunger was incessant; but earlier in the evening we had been lucky enough to find two small lizards which seemed to us a veritable banquet. We had had another find also: some small and very hard, green berries. We chewed these little berries as we lay thinking about our chances of deliverance, chewed them for a long time: it was not that we enjoyed them very much, for our sense of taste had become quite blunted; but we had to offer our stomachs something, and give our jaws a little work to do. We were horribly uneasy that night, and it occurred to us that this might very possibly be our last night on earth.

Presently we had an additional reason for this dismal thought: our stomachs were violently upset; we writhed in pain, and vomited for hours – what if the berries had been poisonous! An agony of fear beset us; we pictured ourselves dying there, lying under the

friendly tree for ever and we determined to leave the creek that very night. The will to live was still strong in us; our youth rebelled at the thought of death.

The moon had just risen when, still sick and feverish, we shoved the boat into the water. We rowed out; but only for a few yards, for the sea was still too rough after the storm of the previous day. We had to turn back to the creek.

In front of us the coast was dark, the land uncannily black. Suddenly we were startled by a red glow in the sky. Could it be a delusion? we asked ourselves. But it was not, it was a fire! And it must have been kindled by men. We need only go to the spot where it burned to find life and deliverance!

Klausmann prayed aloud, thanking God for help in our direst need. He had not the strength to walk, so I set off for the fire alone, confident that in a short time I should be returning to him together with our rescuers.

The red glow beckoned; I could not tell whether the fire was near or far; but so thrilled was I at the prospect of a speedy end to our troubles, that I positively ran, forgetting weakness and pain, I ran on in the moonlight. But the way was long; night passed, dawn returned, and the sun blazed down on the Bush. I had taken no water with me, thinking that the fire would soon be reached, and now I was thirsty again, but I still pushed on, for with rescue practically in sight, what did thirst matter?

Noon found me on a hill; I climbed a rock and found that the smoke was quite close to me. There appeared to be several fires. I expected to see quite a company of men. The idea of help being so near almost made me faint. Could joy kill? I must be calm!

What was it going to be like? The men would offer me water and food, probably kangaroo-flesh, and I would eat for hours. Then we should all set out to

return to my companion. If I were too exhausted, these men would carry me – for they were sure to be natives in that part of the country, and natives were strong.

I raced on, crawled through the last bushes and shouted. They must have heard me. I had arrived!

I stood under the last tree, saw the fire in front of me, and saw – that it was a bush-fire!

Madness and death were upon me; I saw them in the eager, licking flames of the fire.

Then I cursed the Fate that brought me to this, that had fooled me so often. Faith was dead, prayer vain: this was the end!

Something impelled me forward. I saw the fire and knew that it meant death. I had a horror of it, and wanted to go back to my companion; but my legs carried me on into the flames. The smoke choked me. I clutched at my throat, at the scarf knotted round it. I wanted air, more air, I tried to pull off the scarf. My hands clawed at the knots. Then my fingers stiffened, my arms fell down. That scarf, what was it? Heavens above, my mother's scarf! My mother called me, drove me back out of the flames, saved me from madness and death.

I found the way back to the coast and to my companion somehow or other – I did not know how. Within myself were new powers. I realised that madness had touched me by the fire; that death had lain in wait for me there, and I realised that I had been saved from that last terror, and that an inexhaustible power was protecting and guiding me. I was able to calm my companion, promising him that I should have the strength to save us both, that I should row night and day – the great power within me would rescue us.

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We rowed out of the creek about two o'clock in the morning of the thirtieth day since our forced landing. The moon gave enough light. It was the best time for sailing: the sea was as smooth as glass. We dared not trust our boat too far, and we kept only a few yards away from the coast, going carefully round any projecting rocks and from one creek to the next. The muscles of our arms seemed still to have some force left in them. Stroke by stroke, yard by yard we progressed, with infinite slowness, but still we progressed. We feared lest the wind might grow stronger, for if the sea were ever so little rough, we should lose our boat. We feared that we might come to a large, unsheltered creek, for it would be well nigh impossible to get out of it again. When dawn came, we had only done about a mile and a half. We did not dare to remind ourselves that we had nearly 160 miles to go. An hour after sunrise the first wind came and soon it grew stronger. The sea rose too.

The first breakers came over us. We had to get back to the shore as soon as we could. Behind the next tongue of land we saw what we thought was a sheltered creek, and made for it, rowing with all our might. We reached it and found that it was a huge creek with a steep coast all round it. It was open to the sea and quite unprotected. Even in the best possible weather-conditions we should never in this life be able to row over that arm of the sea. On a rocky coast the sea is always rough, the boat would capsize in a minute or two.

Now what? The answer was simple and clear: now the struggle was over. For thirty days we had been fighting for life and deliverance. We had used up the last ounce of will-power and energy. We never stopped to consider whether we were hungry or thirsty, whether the muscles in our arms and legs were alive or dead. All we thought about was getting on,

following the endlessly long road to life and safety. We had obtained strength from prayer and from thoughts of our mothers; but now the end, the absolute end had come. We could not walk, and we could not row any more. The wildness of the land had beaten us. All we could do now was to haul the boat up on to the beach, anchor it well, and then lie down in the shelter of the rocks; we could pray and we could wait. The fight was over!

CHAPTER XI

AN AEROPLANE FLIES OVER

WE lay on the rocks somewhere on the north-west coast of Australia, the place is called Cape Bernier. We were quietly awaiting the end. The boat had been hauled up on the beach and made fast; it contained the last of our water-supply. Our baggage: cushions, magneto, tinder-box and tool-case were all stowed under a ledge of rock near us.

There was nothing left for us to do. For thirty days our efforts had been superhuman; but nothing had come of them. Now we were just waiting, drowsily listening to the lullaby of the surf, and watching the infinite, cloudless stretches of the sky. We pictured our homes and our friends, saw again the start from the Rhine, when the engine was so mulish and refused to run. It was funny to remember about that engine: it might almost have known what lay in store for us on this flight! The sound of an engine was clear in my ears – a tricky thing memory! Or was I dreaming? More and more clearly I heard the droning sound. I was now wide awake, and looked up – to see an aeroplane flying towards us! There was no mistaking it; this was no hallucination. Klausmann had heard the engine too, and was staring wild-eyed up at the little dot in the sky. It was coming nearer; in another minute, if it held on its course, it would be right overhead, and the pilot would see our two figures. This was no time for quiet

and calm! We shouted, we yelled, we waved our arms. I fired off the last bullet in the distress-signal. The red light was certain to be seen. Any moment now the pilot might be throwing provisions down to us – or a letter saying that he would send us help immediately, that we might expect to be rescued in a day or two. Now the plane was over us, would be turning, now . . . it flew on!

Klausmann staggered about like a madman. I stared after it uncomprehendingly: life was passing us once again, and refusing even to see us.

The tiny point disappeared on the horizon. My thoughts became so confused that I began to doubt the reality of what I had seen. Was such a thing possible? How often had we believed that rescue had come, only to be cruelly disappointed?

We lay down again under the sheltering rocks, and attempted to encourage each other. Help would come one of these days. We were being searched for, presently, before it was too late, we should be found, and meanwhile there must be some means of keeping alive. We had water for the next day or two and in the morning I intended to look for mussels, if the sea were calmer. For that night we would prepare some sort of a resting-place for ourselves under a rock.

During the night I made a final summing-up of our case: thirty days previously we had been forced to land in Australia, and here we were at the end of the thirty days, at Cape Bernier. We had fought for a whole month, trying everything to save our lives and confident that by our own strength we should find our way back to civilisation.

Fate had dealt us many hard blows during this time. Our nerves stood the test. We were in good training, not willing to admit defeat or to abandon hope. Every day found us growing weaker, however; our only food during the month had been a fish, some

leaves and berries and a couple of lizards. The will to live increased with every hour that brought us nearer the end. We struggled on until our legs were lifeless, our arms strengthless and our forces spent. Then the end came. Powerless and broken we lay on Cape Bernier. Fate would now decide whether we were to live or die. All we could do was to pray. Here on Cape Bernier we faced our last and worst ordeal, and gave our lives into God's keeping!

CHAPTER XII

THE DENTAL OPERATION

IT would be full moon again in two days. We wondered whether we could survive until the next one; it scarcely seemed likely. The sea had become very rough at nightfall, and we lay listening to the surf until its drowsy note sent us to sleep. We had an unpleasant awakening: the sea had come up to us in our cranny in the rocks, and the waves were beginning to wash over us. For a moment I felt tempted to stay where I was, and allow the sea to make an end of me; but apparently the will to live was still strong in me, for I quickly rejected the idea. We went to a higher place among the rocks, wet to the skin and horribly cold.

Towards morning the sky became overcast, and by noon it was raining; we welcomed the rain which was most unusual at that time of year. We should now have a good water-supply for some time. But the coming of the rain increased our bodily discomfort considerably, for we were without shelter, and could find no wood or dry grass to make a fire.

I had been having twinges of toothache for some days, and the wetting and cold made it much worse. The weakness of my body doubtless made me more vulnerable to the pain; but in any case I was prostrate, and Klausmann was for the time being the fitter of the two. He went off to look for shellfish, while I remained under the rocks groaning with pain.

Klausmann came back in triumph in a few hours: he had found half a dozen whelks. We broke the shells with a stone and swallowed the little creatures alive, but although the flesh of the whelk is said to be wonderfully tender, our sense of taste was so dead that we might just as well have been eating the lizards or the leaves and berries which we had had a few days back. We had to huddle close together that day to keep warm: the sun had quite deserted us, and we shivered in our wet clothes.

I made up my mind to start writing up a diary, from the day of our landing in Australia. Then, even if we were never rescued, perhaps some day it would be found, and its contents would prove a comfort to our friends. They would see that we had thought of them to the last.

But my toothache would not leave me. It was growing worse and worse; I was in a state of fever, and determined to get Klausmann to act as dentist and remove the molar. We could not be too particular about sterilised instruments and cushioned operating-chairs: a pair of rusty pincers would have to be pressed into service and the risk of blood-poisoning offset against hopes of relief.

Klausmann, feeling more nervous than I, sat on a stone. I lay in front of him with my head on his knees and my hands digging into the earth. Klausmann got to work; at first he had great difficulty in opening the pincers wide enough to admit the tooth; then when they did get a grip they broke a piece off.

For two hours he worked away on me – I dare not dwell on that painful experience! Again and again the pincers slipped off, and the tooth broke bit by bit, until there was nothing left for the pincers to hold on to. But we had to release the matter from my gum, so we had to try some other means.

We tried a safety-pin. Klausmann poked and

prodded the tooth with the pin in an effort to get it through; he finally used the pincers as a hammer on the pin, and that did the trick! I pulled the pin out myself, and with it came a quantity of blood and matter – the operation was over!

Klausmann is still proud of this feat of dentistry, and he certainly saved me, though his methods were a trifle crude. We used the safety-pin extensively, loosening the tooth and getting the matter away. For some time we rather expected to see signs of blood-poisoning, but none showed themselves. I was saved, the pain left me, and I was able to thank God for another great mercy!

CHAPTER XIII

A CAVE ON CAPE BERNIER

WE had been three days on Cape Bernier, and during those days it had rained incessantly, and we vainly looked for shelter among the rocks.

How amazing it was that we did not fall ill! We had had practically no food for thirty-three days, our bodies had no powers of resistance left, so if any sickness had come our way, we should have succumbed at once. It is true that I had one or two mild attacks of toothache again; but each time the safety-pin proved invaluable!

We were able to find some more whelks during the three days; we hunted for them when the tide ebbed. We imagined that two or three mouthfuls of flesh would give us back our old strength.

The rain was certainly far from pleasant, but it did bestow on us the great gift of fresh water, and that was lucky, because on our first night on Cape Bernier the tide had washed over our boat and the sea-water had got into our fresh-water supply. Now that the rain had come, however, we should have drinking-water for some weeks to come – longer than we should need it, we thought.

On the third day we smoked our last pipe. At the time of the forced landing we had had twelve cigars, fifty cigarettes and a packet of tobacco on the plane. We rationed this supply for fourteen days. When the cigars and cigarettes were smoked, the packet of



The rescue



A hunter demonstrates use of spear



tobacco remained our greatest possession. We sometimes had one pipe between us in the evenings; but when the rainy days came, smoking was our only means of warming ourselves – or at least of giving ourselves the illusion of warmth. When the last morsel of tobacco had been smoked, Klausmann carefully packed the pipe away, as if to say that soon now everything would be over for us.

On the fourth day it was still raining. We were desperately uncomfortable and wanted above all things a hiding-place from the rain, where we might lie down and quietly await the end. We crawled over the shingle for perhaps 100 yards along the coast, round a headland where we had not previously been, and suddenly we came upon a wonderful cave.

We had found our church, our cathedral.

The rocky cavity was several yards deep and wide; it lay over the level of the water, and was open to the sea. The ceiling arched over us like a cathedral-dome. A projecting rock protected the entrance, so that no rain came in. The rocks of Cape Bernier were about eighty or 100 yards away, and the roar of the breakers on those rocks sounded to us in our cavern like the pealing of bells. It was as if we were in church. We could await the end in this place very quietly, it was indescribably beautiful.

On the next night – the night of the thirty-fifth day – the rain stopped and the rising sun awoke us next morning. The sunlight gave us new life. It dried our clothes, warmed our bodies and provided us with dry wood for our fire. There was some grass growing among the rocks, and we laboriously plucked it to make a bed for ourselves in the cave. Then we collected some driftwood, made a fire and felt extremely happy.

The flame of the camp-fire spoke to us of life, of the

winter evenings at home, with our mothers happily preparing supper. It was good to live over again our happy young days. There was no violent emotion in those memories, and no more longing for life. Our souls were now bent on a bigger adventure. We lay quite still on our grassy couch, moving only when the fire needed replenishing.

On the morning of the thirty-sixth day we tried once more to find some shellfish, but in vain. Nor had we the strength left to go as far as the fresh water pools left by the rain. We could not leave our cave, our bodies were done for.

Our supply of wood was sufficient for a few days. We intended to keep the fire burning for that time, and not to go to sleep. We wanted to be awake every minute of those last days, to miss not a moment's experience. Then, when the last stick had been burnt and the fire had died out, we would go to rest, and sleep a long, deep sleep.

It was more wonderful than any words can describe. The clear, starry night of the South Seas, with sea and coast bathed in moonlight, then the first glimmer of red in the east, presently becoming a brilliant blaze and finally the sun's first rays. The red ball of the rising sun rose triumphantly out of the water, and the vast sea sparkled in a thousand colours. The world was so beautiful! From our couch we were able to watch the progress of the sun all through the day, and we greedily absorbed every ray into ourselves.

During those last days Klausmann's nerves had quite recovered. He told me all about his life; we became like brothers.

On the second day of our cave existence and the thirty-seventh of our life in Australia, we were extraordinarily weary; but we did not want to go to sleep, because the fire would last for another three days, and if we kept awake all that time, surely we should be so

ready for sleep that our eyelids would close of themselves, and there would be no struggle.

I had folded away the map of Australia. We no longer needed to know where Wyndham lay; we had resigned ourselves to our fate, and were absolutely at peace. The breakers thundered continuously on Cape Bernier, and in our cathedral-cave we heard their echo like the pealing of bells. Always, while life lasts, I shall have the sound of those bells in my ears.

I was still making a few notes in my diary; on the thirty-eighth day we even had strength enough to take a photograph. It would be a last greeting for my mother.

During the next night a ship sailed by, not far from the coast. Its lights spoke to us of life, of another strange world. We no longer troubled about it, for us it was a lost world.

On the thirty-ninth day we had sticks enough left only for a few hours. The fire would be out by the evening. Then we would go to sleep. My thoughts were becoming confused, and I found it difficult to write my notes. Finally I wrote the last sentence, and put the pages in my breast-pocket. The sun went down. In its red glow I distinctly saw my home. The fire flickered once or twice, then went out. With closed eyes we repeated the Lord's Prayer, word for word. And the bells sounded in our cathedral.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RESCUE

WHO was calling me? Who was waking me up again when all I wanted was to sleep – to go on sleeping for ever?

It was Klausmann. He was awake. But why did he call me back to realities? My thoughts were becoming clear again – too clear.

I saw myself helpless and condemned to die at twenty-six. For forty days there had been a struggle against madness and death. How much longer was it going on? And why? I knew that life was to be found in the next town. But I had to lie idle, spent and only waiting for my heart to stop beating. And my mother would be waiting for me at home.

Yesterday it had not been so bad. My thoughts had been confused, and I had been glad to go to sleep; that long sleep seemed wonderfully peaceful and painless. But now I was awake again; my brain was awake, my eyes could still see, and they strayed over the lifeless rocks of the coast, seeking the sun, seeking life.

The sun was rising over yonder. How splendid the infinite ocean looked in the golden rays! God in Heaven, life, grant us our life again!

My eyes stared into the sun rising over the cliffs of Cape Bernier, and upon those cliffs, in the sunshine, stood a man!

A man stood on the Cape! Life over there, only 100 yards from us!

Was I raving mad? No, no, the silhouette moved, leapt from rock to rock, looking for something. All I had to do was to shout, but I lay motionless, petrified, incapable of making a sound; then with a supreme effort I raised my arm and pointed.

Klausmann saw my movement. He sat up and then I heard a cry – a cry that will remain for ever in my ears – all the horror of our endless fight for life was in that inhuman sound. It was a frightful cry, but it brought us deliverance. Only a second or two later and the man would have disappeared without having seen us in our cave.

Klausmann's cry re-echoed in the rocks. The silhouette stiffened, turned, saw us, made a sign, and with great bounds came towards us and stood at the entrance to the cave.

A man stood at the entrance to our cave with a fish in his hand. With an awkward movement of his hand he gave us the fish – gave us life! . . .

At this point I wish to make an explanation to my readers.

When we had been rescued and returned to civilisation, the first person to greet us in Wyndham was a reporter. This man had been sent to Wyndham by the Australian press to wire throughout the world the successive sensational reports concerning the search for the missing airmen. As was but right in one of his calling, he rained questions upon me, and I had to put up with it, seeing he had introduced himself as a reporter. Then we were given a most hearty welcome by the whole population of Wyndham, but quite soon I noticed that almost every person we met tried to get something sensational out of us, and flew to the telegraph office with the wildest tales

which they had concocted out of our very brief replies.

That disgusted me with civilisation. Please understand me. We were coming out of another world. For weeks we had been fighting madness and death. We returned to civilisation, and found that there were people – and well-meaning people too – who wanted to make money out of our experiences.

On that first day in Wyndham I resolved on the spur of the moment that I would never in my life say a word about our experiences on the north-west coast of Australia; they had been too terrible.

But in the night of that same day, when I lay sleepless, reviewing the hard time now behind us, I made another resolution. It was to make known throughout the world all that we had gone through, and especially all that concerned our rescue and our rescuers. I had very special reasons for considering it my duty to do so.

We were found by natives of Australia, naked, black men. When I tell you how those Samaritans of the wilds tended and cared for us, you will understand that I wish to bear witness to the noblest and greatest virtue of the human soul – charity!

There are, it is estimated, 50,000 aborigines in Australia, mostly living in the Bush. Opinions regarding them are very diverse. One man will say: 'In my opinion there is not five cents' worth of good in a native. The fellows ought to be exterminated,' and another: 'These simple blacks can very easily be taught to work; it is up to us to give them a helping-hand.'

As for my opinion, it is based on our own actual experience. Their treatment of us showed a generosity that I have rarely met with in any people in the world. In order to thank the aborigines of Australia, and to show the world, above all, the English and

Australian people, that the native can be trained to be a useful member of society, I am writing this account.

My second reason for relating our Australian adventures is to give the whole world the thanks of my mother, my companion and myself for sympathy extended to us. It was a glorious feeling to receive telegrams and letters from every quarter of the globe.

Finally, I wish to sing a song of praise to all the men who searched for us, be they police-officers or missionaries, be they pilots flying for days over that wild country, for whom a forced landing would have meant a similar fate to our own, or seafaring men sailing in a small, unseaworthy motor-boat round the unprotected coast. To all those men and to the Australian government which incorporates them, I am attempting to offer our grateful thanks.

The recording of these experiences shall be a *Te Deum* to God who sent out the white and the black messengers to rescue us!

The man brought us a fish. We ate it raw. But what was happening to me? With every mouthful I was becoming more restless, I sat up, and crawled to the entrance of the cave. My eyes strayed over the cliffs of Cape Bernier, the blood went to my head, it ached, and then everything seemed to grow dark around me.

Oh, surely I was not going to lose my reason now that God in His mercy had given me my life back!

I was still wearing my mother's scarf round my neck, and I clutched at it desperately, and prayed. This was my hardest fight yet – the fight against madness brought on by joy.

I knelt at the entrance of the cave and gazed in the direction of the sun whose light seemed so harsh to my eyes. My powers of resistance were growing weaker; the terrible thing was coming upon me.

Then somebody knelt beside me, supported me, gave me water to drink. A naked, black man knelt there and prayed. That was salvation. I shall never forget that picture. The man beside me wept tears of joy, sobbed and prayed – for the second time he gave me life!

CHAPTER XV

THE NEW LIFE

WE had eaten the fish, and were becoming calmer. Our rescuer stood before us, trying to explain something. We did not understand; but we felt his delight at having found us. We grasped the fact that he had been looking for us. So apparently it was known that we had drifted on to this coast.

We did not trouble to think of what was to happen next. It was sufficient for us to have a man with us. He knew the country, and would be able to procure food and drink for us, and then something else would happen.

Our rescuer went to the entrance and made to leave the cave. That would never do. We could not allow him to go away again. We refused to be left alone for a minute. He understood our alarm, and made some reassuring signs, pointing to the Bush. Then he went off, leaping over the rocks. We watched him anxiously. How wonderfully elastic and strong a healthy man was. Were we ever like that? It seemed almost incredible.

The Bush began some 300 or 400 yards from the cape. The native had arrived there, and for a few minutes we could not see him. Then a fire blazed up, and instantly a large part of the forest was in flames. A huge pillar of smoke rose into the air; but only for a short time, then the fire died down. Our friend was

coming back to us, springing from rock to rock. Presently he stood on the highest rocky plateau, waved to us, and pointed away to the distance. Smoke was ascending about a mile and a half away: it was the answer to our fire-signal. Beaming with joy and gesticulating with both arms, our rescuer sat down beside us again.

Every now and then he would jump up and look in the direction of the second fire. About twenty minutes passed; Klausmann and myself were sitting close together by the entrance. Presently the native jumped up once more, and pointed to the coast where there now appeared three more men – blacks likewise. They heard our shouts, saw us, and came running up. At the cave-entrance they stood speechless, gazing at us. We must have looked frightful with our long hair and beards and as thin as skeletons. Nobody spoke when they saw us both sobbing for joy.

One of the three silently handed me a letter. The envelope was black with dirt, but how tenderly I held in my hands this first sign of civilisation! The address was almost illegible:

‘FOR THE TWO LOST AVIATORS’

and the letter said:

‘DEAR FRIENDS, –

‘If you live to receive this letter a great miracle will have happened, and in deep reverence we shall thank our Heavenly Father. We have been searching the country for you for weeks. Aeroplanes, a motor-boat, and police patrols have been sent out from Wyndham. Several hundred natives from the Forest River Mission Station and from our station are searching the coast and up-country. We have divided the blacks into companies of four or five

men. Each group has a copy of this letter, some pounds of flour and tinned meat. If you live to receive this letter, send two of the natives at once to us with the good news, and give the name of the place where you were found. Then be patient for a few more days, and we shall send people with provisions and medicine to you, and bring you to the mission station. Have no fear or horror of the natives. They are your friends, and will take good care of you. We pray our Lord that this letter may find you still alive.

‘THE PADRE OF THE DRYSDALE RIVER

MISSION STATION.’

I do not know how often I read this letter and translated it to Klausmann. My eyes and brain could not take it in that we were actually rescued. But we needed only to look up and see the four men grouped round us.

One of the natives – the one who had handed me the letter, the only one wearing trousers, and apparently the leader – had in the meantime opened a linen bag and displayed to us four tins of beef and a quantity of flour. While I went on reading the letter, Klausmann opened one of the tins with some nippers from the tool-bag. One of the blacks had gathered sticks and quickly made up the fire. Another went to fetch water. Some flour was sprinkled on a large stone, stirred up with yeast and water, and kneaded to a dough. Then the fire was scraped out, and the dough placed in the glowing embers and covered with ashes.

We watched the preparations hungrily. It was an unforgettable moment when the scent of the newly-baked bread filled the cave. To us it seemed an eternity before the ashes were thrown back and the bread clapped with a stone; but at last our rescuer

divided the warm loaf, and gave us each some of this wonderful gift of God.

Klausmann and I sat at the cave-entrance and ate bread and meat. We chewed devoutly and carefully, picking up every crumb that fell. The natives were visibly touched. Afterwards I attempted to write a few lines to the missionaries of the Drysdale Mission Station; but I could not manage it, I was too excited and overjoyed to find the right words. I simply gave the name of the place where we were found, and begged that further help might be sent as soon as possible. I expressed one more wish in the letter: that some means should be found of wiring immediately to my mother the first news of the rescue.

Ten minutes later two of the blacks were already setting out. I understood that they had to go a distance of eighty miles to the mission station, and they promised to do that formidable walking-feat in three or four days. Without having rested, without even having had a bite to eat, they departed, racing and bounding along the coast.

We were left alone with the other two. They were sitting quite still by the cavern-entrance, and I had an opportunity of observing more closely their magnificent physique.

To make description easier I shall give each of the natives, including those who came along later, a name illustrating his qualities or activities. It would be confusing if I attempted to reproduce the actual names, as they were gurgled to me with all the guttural sounds of the native speech. I shall therefore in future call the native who found us 'Rescuer', and the second, who stayed behind with us, 'Hunter'. This title is absolutely correct, for the man undoubtedly was the best huntsman of his tribe. I have known him return to camp with two kangaroos that he had slain while other men hunted in vain, and explained to us by

signs that kangaroos are rarely caught on the coast, but go farther inland.

The two men by the cave-entrance had great, wiry frames. Their chests, backs, arms and legs were covered with deep scars. These are the marks of the tribe. As soon as a lad grows up, he has to have them to indicate that he has now arrived at man's estate. Deep cuts are made in various parts of his body; these are then smeared with sand and ashes, and the scars resulting from the sores thus caused are sometimes a centimetre thick. I later saw the same mark on native women, and when I was taking my leave of the natives they were most anxious to confer this special honour on myself, and to make me a chief of the tribe. I am certain that they had made it a matter of careful deliberation before finally communicating their decision to me, and that to them it must have been incomprehensible that I should not have accepted the honour.

Both men were quite naked when they arrived, but in the meantime they had tied a scrap of cloth round their waists, doubtless as a mark of respect to white men. Both wore their black hair rolled up in a knot at the back of their heads, and both had been shaved comparatively recently. I could not imagine how they could have managed this feat, as they carried no knives, however, a few days later I was initiated into this mystery.

They sat very still, apparently on the watch for something down by the water's edge. Suddenly the Hunter sprang up, pointed to the beach and raced off. He stood by the water, a wonderful silhouette against the light background. Like a runner at the start of a race he stood, the upper part of his body bent forward, his right arm curved backwards, the hand holding a spear ready to throw. Presently there came a shrill cry, the spear was flung into the water, the Hunter

after it with a leap. Our Rescuer had remained in the cave, watching everything most carefully. Next minute he turned round and tried to explain to us with great glee that we should soon have another fish to eat. Sure enough the Hunter returned very quickly with a fish weighing four or five pounds. I cannot really say whether this fish, which we roasted, tasted better than the first one which we had eaten raw.

For the night our friends procured fresh grass and made a big soft couch; then they fetched some more firewood. They themselves required neither grass nor pillow, they lay on the bare stones and so near the fire that I thought their skin would be scorched. But of course it no longer was skin, but tanned leather. These men could walk with perfect ease on the sharp stones which had made our feet bleed.

Two more batches of bread were baked. In the evening we opened the third tin of beef – there was only one now left over. One loaf was a little burnt. I tried to bite the crust, but could not – my teeth were all loose. However I soon found a way of eating easily. It was to shove the soft bread and the cut-up and cooked tinned beef into my mouth and simply bolt the lot and go on bolting until the tin was empty and the last crumb of bread gone.

But our stomachs were not in good working order, and the food came back the way it had gone; no matter, in a few minutes we were eating – or rather bolting down – some more.

And then came the night, that marvellous night of our new life, of our rebirth. The sun had set, and again, as so often before, I clearly saw my home in the glowing western horizon. But this time I knew that I should actually see it again.

We lay arm in arm. Neither of us, of course, thought of sleep, our nerves were too wide-awake.

Besides, we would not have had the courage to sleep, because on waking up we would have thought that it had all been a dream. I was even afraid to close my eyes: I simply had to keep looking at the two men beside us. They did not seem to be able to sleep either. The Rescuer was telling his companion some story or other, probably the story of how he had found us. He grew excited and waved his hands and arms. We lay quiet, observing their silhouettes in the glow of the fire, and listening to the words. Even if we did not understand, it was the voice of a man – it was true – we were rescued!

Later the two became quieter, for a time they softly hummed a strange, high-pitched tune. Then they seemed tired, they put more wood on the fire and went off to sleep. Their arms were their pillows, the bare rock their bed and the warm fire took the place of a blanket. How little those men asked of life and how gratefully their eyes glowed as they ate a piece of meat or fish.

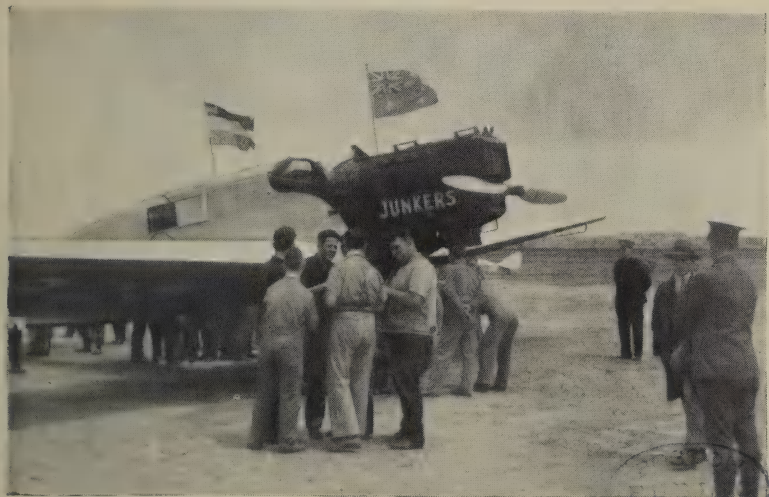
Everything was quiet, almost uncannily quiet, like the many nights of the past weeks. I lay on my side so as to be able to keep an eye on our friends. My brain was trying to sort out and understand all that had happened, but it was not easy. What a frightful time we had gone through, and how endlessly long the forty days and nights had been! What was it like twenty-four hours ago when the fire went out, and I prepared for the end? Suddenly all was changed – we had been rescued at the last minute. Now we were taking it almost as a matter of course that two men should be lying there beside us, ready to provide us with food and our bodies with sustenance.

Those shining stars above us, how often had they seen our despair, and heard our cries for help and our prayers? How beautiful life and the world had seemed when we appeared to be saying good-bye to them!

Now we were saved; now we lived again, and could go back to the homes we longed for, back to our mothers. My brain was too weak to comprehend such a miracle, and my speech too halting to convey it to others. But one thing I knew, and that truth was clearly written before me, whether I gazed upon the shining sea and the starry heaven or closed my eyes; I knew that I had been reborn, that here there now breathed a different man from the man of forty days back. I knew that I had gone through as hard a school of life as there could be, and that I had stood the test. An inexhaustible strength was in me, and that strength I should have to turn to account.



The first white men



Two flags on board

CHAPTER XVI

SAMARITANS OF THE WILDERNESS

MORNING dawned and the new day came. Klausmann had fallen asleep; I got up and went to sit by the entrance. Presently someone sat down beside me, and looked hard at me. It was the Rescuer, and I was glad that he should see the happiness in my eyes. For a long time he sat there, quite quietly, and just gazing steadily at me, as if he understood the new world within me.

Klausmann was awakened by the scent of newly-baked bread. For breakfast we opened our last tin of beef. We had not the fortitude to economise our stores – we had been starving too long. Besides, we relied utterly upon our deliverers. These good Samaritans were quite unwilling to take a bit of bread even from us, and I am certain that during the seventeen days' search for us they had never touched the sack with the provisions. The Padre at the mission station had told them that the provisions were for the two white men, the sack was taboo for them – not to be touched.

After breakfast they tried to tell us something. I gathered that the one wanted to spear a fish, and the other to make a big fire. His widely opened eyes and a slow, all-embracing movement of the arm surely indicated that the smoke would be seen at a distance. Presently he stood with outstretched arm and index-finger pointed; then hopped, clapping his hands for

joy. I gathered that a great banner of smoke was to announce to the other natives scattered throughout the country that we had been found; then they would all dance for joy. Our two friends would not leave the cave before we had grasped their intentions. Then they raced off, one with his spear, the other with a burning stick.

Very soon a big tract of the Bush-country was in flames. The native had carefully studied the direction of the wind, and prepared the fire, so that it should burn only towards the coast, and not cause a forest-fire. When Klausmann and I later dragged ourselves a few yards higher on to a crag, we could see that smoke was ascending at two or three places far inland. Now the signal would be sent over the whole country, and the joyful tidings made known to all the tribes of natives. Somewhat later a smoky pillar rose some eight or nine miles away. We should certainly be having visitors soon.

Towards noon both men came back without having caught a fish. The water was not calm enough – so I understood from the signs of the Hunter. In the forenoon we had baked two more loaves; we had to be eating all the time, we could not or would not wait for long periods between meals. Our supply of flour was coming to an end, and for a moment we were inclined to be a trifle uneasy; but then we felt ashamed of ourselves. I divided the bread into equal portions, but it was only with the greatest difficulty that I could persuade our black friends to have a little bit. The natives are probably accustomed to long fasts. Afterwards we sat down and waited for something; but what it was I could not this time make out from the signs. The two men kept gazing at the coast.

It was late in the afternoon when a man stepped out of the Bush, followed by five or six others. They heard

us calling, and came running up – three black men and nine women. There were greetings and general rejoicing.

Things now became very lively, there was a chirping of voices and a yelping of dogs; but not for long, because the women had to leave the cave with the dogs – ordered out by one of the old men. Then the three new visitors sat down beside us.

Before any words were spoken gifts were handed out: a fish, the gigantic leg of a kangaroo and a pot of honey. Or was it honey? The bottom of an old jam-jar was covered with a brown sticky-looking mass in which something moved. On closer inspection I recognised flies – dozens of them. I must have pulled a face, for everyone laughed. Then one man sat down by me, poked his finger into the pot and licked it with every sign of enjoyment. To be perfectly honest I must say that we hesitated for a moment; but then our fingers were dipped in with the rest and greedily licked, delicious wild honey! In a very few minutes there was not a trace of honey left in the pot. It was a banquet. And the flies caught in the honey? Don't ask me; but try to remember how long we had had to go hungry – we were presented with some honey, and what, after all, did a few flies matter?

When it came to tackling the leg of kangaroo, we found the flesh rather tough and a good deal dirtied with sand and ashes. I attempted to bite a piece off, and very nearly broke two of my teeth. That would never do, but naturally we wanted to eat. There was meat before us, five or six pounds of it, and we could not bite it. For a moment the natives watched our vain attempts, then the Hunter took the leg, laid it on the ground, and beat the flesh soft with a stone, breaking it into small pieces. 'Minced meat, served with sand and ashes.' We had another try, and took very small bites; but all we could do was to swallow without

chewing it. The flesh was still too tough to be masticated, and our stomachs would never digest these great unchewed lumps. It was desperate.

Once more the natives came to the rescue. Our first friend sat between us, took the meat in his mouth, and chewed it long and carefully. Then he took it out again and handed it to us. Did I hesitate again for a second? I did not, but we both wept tears of gratitude as we swallowed the meat. The five black men sat round us, breaking up the leg, chewing the bits and giving us the meat out of their mouths. On all sides black and dirty hands were holding out food to us. The Rescuer saw to it that the pieces were chewed finely enough. And we ate! Gratefully and happily we ate, until nothing remained but the bare bones.

The meal over, I had time to inspect the new arrivals more closely. One of them appeared to be very young but already he bore the tribal sign of man's estate; the other two were old, but it was quite impossible to guess their age even approximately. They might have been thirty, fifty or seventy years old. All had the same scars, so they all belonged to the same tribe. The 'old one' who had turned the women out was probably the chief.

They all talked together, trying to explain something. In the end this was the story that I built up from their sign-language: The heads of a mission station had weeks ago organised the search. They dispatched all the available natives in bands of from two to four men, each band carrying a letter and a sack of provisions. Away from the coast – inland – the blacks who were on their way to carry out this commission came across the camps of various other tribes, and all of them at once took part in the search. The chief of the tribe that found us sent on ahead the two strongest of his men – the Rescuer and the Hunter

— to patrol the coast. The tribe followed more slowly; it was continually kept informed by fires. On the day before they came to our cavern, the Hunter had found the damaged part of our float which we had left about one and a half or two miles along the coast from our cave. They had camped that night near the float, made an early start next morning, and searched farther along the coast until the Rescuer found us in the cavern shortly after sunrise.

It was very difficult for me to piece this story together from the language of signs, but it is correct, as I later heard from the missionaries.

At nightfall there was a great deal of liveliness in the creek. Camp-fires were burning in the shelter of the rocks at four different places. One of the two old men whom I shall call our 'bodyguard' remained with us in the cave. The other four went away to the different fires with their wives — the chief had three. There was no supper for the natives that night, for the leg of kangaroo which Klausmann and I had devoured had doubtless been intended for their evening meal. But nobody complained; until late in the night we could hear the sound of animated conversations from all the fires, and later still, the queer, high tune of a song sung softly for hours.

Klausmann and the old man were already asleep by the fire. I could not rest, and went to sit at the cave-entrance to look down on the strange picture below. The night was dark, the flames of the different fires were throwing fantastic reflections on the rocky coast and on the Bush. We had baked the last of the flour in the evening, and I still had half a loaf, bit by bit of which I was eating during the night. I was very tired, but could not sleep. I had to keep looking at the burnt-down fires down below me. When dawn came and sun rose I was still sitting at the cave-entrance. The natives were awake, they spoke to

one another, but nobody got up, they all huddled as near as possible to the warming fires, seeking shelter from the very chilly sea-wind. Not until the sun rose higher did it become more lively in the camp. The blacks did not waste much time over their morning-toilet: anyone possessing a loin-cloth put it on, and there the difficult procedure ended. There was no breakfast, one had to hunt or fish first.

Presently they prepared to go hunting; the three hunters examined their weapons. They were very pleased to explain the use of the spear. A piece of polished glass or a sharp stone was fixed to the end of a very straight bamboo rod about two, to two and a quarter yards long. With great pride the Hunter showed me a metal point which very possibly he received at the mission station in payment for some service rendered there. The slaying of a kangaroo was apparently no easy matter. 'Kangaroo - ta - ta - ta - ta -' he said, and the movement of his hand described the great bounds with which the animal made off. Then came a dumb-show performance by the Hunter: he stood perfectly still behind a rock, holding the dart in his right hand. We had to imagine the kangaroo leaping about in the Bush in the background, the hunter pursuing him with enormous strides. Then he suddenly stopped, his body bent far back, and the spear flew through the air and pierced a tree-trunk. Marvellous! I believe the throw must have been at least fifty yards. They were all delighted at my enthusiasm. Then the play became earnest.

The three hunters trotted off, spear in hand, in different directions; behind them raced two wives, each carrying three or four spears, a stone-axe and a hamper. This hamper, in which all the possessions of the family could be packed, had been fashioned out of a piece of undressed tree-bark, and could be renewed

if necessary when a suitable tree presented itself – surely a cheap and sensible solution of the packing difficulty! The chief departed with his three wives to catch fish and to look for honey; his bearer carried old tin pots and the smaller and lighter spears used for fishing.

The old man remained behind in the cave as body-guard, and told long stories, not a word of which I understood. I did manage to make out, however, that once in his life he had come in contact with white hunters, and that in his palmy days he had possessed four wives who one by one had left him or been carried off by other natives.

Towards noon we heard the shrill cries by means of which the natives communicate with one another at a distance. The old man listened; then he jumped up in great excitement, plucked a couple of burning sticks from the fire, raced down to the beach, and looked for a place with fresh sand. On the instant he dug a hole, and started in it a new fire. Presently, with loud shouts and every appearance of joy, three other figures leapt out of the Bush – the Hunter and his two wives.

Our friend stood proudly before us, on his shoulder a slain kangaroo and in his hand its tail. He beamed as he handed us the tail – a present for the guests of honour. The women were dragging a second kangaroo, an enormous beast. In those few hours the Hunter had had astounding luck. I was told later that inland the kangaroos are to found in herds, whereas here on the coast, in the dry season, you come across them only one here and there.

Then began the preparations for the slaughter-day feast, the climax in the lives of the natives. The other hunters and their wives had been informed by fire-signals, and they came back from various sides. None of them had had any luck, but the two beasts which

had been killed ought to last for at least a week – so I thought.

The women and dogs departed to their own camps, and from there watched with interest the doings of the men, who settled down round the newly made-up fire. The first thing to be skinned was our gift, the kangaroo-tail, which was quite a yard long and five or six pounds in weight. The skin was put on one side, and later thrown to the dogs. The sinews were carefully removed from the flesh, smoothed with spit, and wound in a workman-like manner round a piece of wood. They would come in useful for all sorts of purposes later. Next the tail was cut, some fresh water was poured into an old tin pot, and soon our first kangaroo-soup was being cooked. Never before or since have I tasted such delicious soup as this unsalted broth served up in a dirty pot. The meat was still a trifle tough, but still, after its long boiling, we were able to bite and chew it ourselves this time.

A hole was dug in the sand, lined with hot ashes, and both the slain animals placed in it, covered with red-hot sticks and sand. In this manner enclosed in glowing ashes and sand, the meat was stewed.

Twenty or twenty-five minutes passed, during which the Hunter gave an animated account of his prowess to his companions. From time to time one of the natives poked a wooden stick through the sand strewn over the meat, in order to see how the kangaroo roast was getting on. The odour arising out of the air-holes was sniffed approvingly and with much eloquent rolling of eyes. At last the sand and ashes were thrown away, and the steaming roast removed from the hole. It lay before us, giving out the most appetising smell, and it mattered nothing to us that we had no tablecloth, no plates and no knives or forks: we were solely concerned with the business of eating! The

warm blood of the fresh roast is a delicacy; we scoop it out of the animal's breast-cavity with our hands, and with the same dirty hands we tear off great chunks of meat. What do we care if a little sand and ashes are swallowed with the meat, what difference does it make that we once again receive our meat out of the mouths of our black friends? We are happy and content, grateful for our 'daily bread'.

We ate for one hour, two hours, three hours: we ate until the evening without interruption! I had in the meantime accustomed myself to be surprised at nothing; but all the same what I saw here did fairly pass my comprehension. Klausmann and I were terribly hungry, and we swallowed pounds and pounds of the flesh of the kangaroo, but then we simply had to pause. However, the natives did no such thing; they went on eating, in the end stuffing even the hair and the skin of the animals into their stomachs which actually and visibly swelled!

When night came there was not the smallest morsel of meat or skin left over.

The most voracious appetite is some time stilled, so our banquet came to an end in the evening. All that was missing then for perfect bliss, was a pipe of tobacco and a glass of beer! But we certainly had little cause for complaint, seeing that in the last few hours we had eaten ten times as much as in the preceding forty days.

For some time our black friends had to allow their food to digest. They squatted dully by the fire, obviously exhausted by the hard work of the protracted feed! However, there was still something to be done that evening, it seemed. When we were preparing to retire to rest in the cave, our friends held us back; some more sticks were thrown on the fire, and the Hunter took up the word:

'Ta-ta-ta-ta-ta, teliep, black fellow, ta-ta-ta-ta.' I

could make nothing of this – it was a regular cross-word puzzle. The fellow was not stupid, and he saw that our knowledge of each other's language was not sufficient for a clear understanding, so he found a better and clearer method of explaining himself – he played!

Jumping up from the fire, he ran to the cave, said good-bye to somebody or other on the grassy couch, took a piece of paper in his hand, went back to the entrance of the cave, again waved to the person in question, and made off with great strides. He ran for a couple of minutes up and down the beach, then came back tired out to the fire and lay down. All the time he was running he kept shouting his 'ta-ta-ta-ta-ta,' when he lay down his explanation was 'teliep'.

He jumped up again, raced around as before and returned to the fire. Twice more he went through the same performance; then he shaded his eyes with his hand, saw something in the distance, was hugely delighted, and finally greeted a man and smilingly handed over to him the piece of paper.

I understood the explanation. I knew now that the two messengers would be four days on the way to the mission with our letter. So the 'ta-ta-ta-ta' meant running, the 'teliep' meant resting in camp, very likely coming from the English word sleep. It took four days to go from our cave to the mission station, it seemed; I should have liked to know what steps they were going to take at the station to fetch us. We could not possibly undertake such a long march, even if we fed for weeks on the kangaroo flesh-pots of the natives.

Our friend understood my question. He got up from the fire again, and took hold of his spear. With the tip of the spear he drew a zigzag line in the sand, and put a cross at either end. It was not difficult to understand that this line was supposed to represent

the coast, and that the two crosses stood for our cave and the mission station.

'Puff-puff-puff-puff-puff,' the spear followed from the first cross of the coast-line – 'teliep' – three times 'teliep' to the second cross. That very clearly meant that a motor-boat was being sent from the mission station, round the coast, and that the journey would take three days.

I have made a point of telling the reader about this scene to show that even the most primitive man has a thinking brain, and when I presently relate another fact you will see from it that the aborigines of Australia possess something which we civilised men have unfortunately lost to a great extent.

In his language of signs the Hunter explained to us that we should have to leave our cave very soon, because there was no more water to be found on this part of the coast. He tried to convince us that we should have to walk as far as the large water-basin which we had found after our days of frightful wandering on the open sea. It was not much more than a mile and a half to two miles, but even that short distance seemed immense to us in our enfeebled state.

Something would have to be done, for we knew that we should have to wait at least three or four days before the motor-boat arrived, and we did not want to be thirsty during that time. The Hunter seemed to know of some expedient, and he persuaded us to prepare for departure on the following morning. I could not imagine how we were going to manage, because the Bush was too dense to permit of the natives carrying us, but I left things to our friends. I relied, above all, on the sense of those nature-men who were at home in the wilderness.

All through the night Klausmann and I lay in the cave watching with amazement what was going on in the camp. Two of the natives marched off, armed

with burning torches and with a stone axe. In an hour's time they returned, and two others went away in the same direction, also coming back. Two by two the natives took it in turn to leave the camp, stay away some time, and then come back, all that night, and allowing themselves only the briefest of rests.

Next morning we left the cave and walked through the Bush along the coast – walked on a road that was almost as smooth as a parquet floor. The plain truth of it was that during the night the natives had cut a pathway through the thicket!

CHAPTER XVII

BACK TO CIVILISATION

IT was the forty-seventh day since our forced landing and the seventh since our rescue. For four days we had been lying on a bed of grass in our old creek, where weeks ago we had been driven ashore. At that time we had thankfully kissed the earth when an all-powerful Fate had brought us back safely to land from the infinite waters. And in that same creek we could now lie, only needing to make a sign, and a drink of fresh water or a lump of kangaroo-meat would be placed before us.

Something new was going to happen that day, for it took seven days to go from the cave to the mission station and back, said the Hunter. Ever since the early morning all the natives, with the exception of our bodyguard, had been up and doing. They were patrolling about, climbing the rocks, and watching the coast and the country round about for fire-signals.

Klausmann and I were becoming more and more restless as the day advanced. Decidedly our nerves were no longer of the strongest. We were almost ashamed of our impatience, but one thought only tormented us: we must without loss of time communicate with the outer world so as to send off the first news of our rescue. Every minute of uncertainty as to our fate might break a mother's heart. I was terribly afraid lest the news should arrive only a few hours too late.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. We were lying on the coast in the shadow of some bushes, watching the horizon for a puff of smoke. Presently in the distance we heard a shout. It came nearer. We jumped up; a native stood before us – one we had never previously seen. Trembling with excitement the black man handed us a piece of paper. There were only a few words scribbled on it in pencil:

‘DEAR FRIENDS –

‘In a few minutes we shall be with you. Do not be afraid of the joyful news. Your time of suffering is at an end!

‘CONSTABLE MARSHALL.’

I stared at the scrap of paper, everything went black about me. I remembered nothing, saw, heard and knew nothing more; but only felt the arms of a white man around me . . . on the afternoon of the forty-seventh day after the forced landing the world found us!

In the evening four white men sat by the fire, and a number of natives squatted round them. For hours we told them about our adventures, and for hours they had to tell us exactly how everything happened. From Constable Marshall we learned all that the outer world had done for us, and how at last we were found:

‘It is a miracle that we found you alive. The whole world had given you up, and especially those who know the Australian desert: they did not think you had a ghost of a chance. How is it credible that you were able to survive that time, the endlessly long time of hunger and thirst? Two years ago a couple of pilots landed somewhere in the Australian wilderness – and by the third day they had died of thirst. And yet you

were able to fight on for forty days in that Hell without water or food. In the night of the 14th May you started in Kupang on a flight over the Timor Sea, and from that hour you were never heard of – you might have disappeared from the earth. On the very next day the search for you began: aeroplanes, ships and police-patrols searched the coast between Wyndham and Port Darwin and searched the Timor Sea also for the wreckage of your plane. According to the experts there were two possibilities: you had either had a forced landing on the Timor Sea and your plane had sunk after some hours – or days – or else you had touched at some part of the uninhabited Australian coast, in which case you were given, at most, one week to live. Naturally nobody had any idea that you could have been driven so far out of your course by the night-gale, and you would never have been looked for on this part of the coast if a miracle had not happened!

‘On the 6th June the German consul-general in Sydney cabled to the German government:

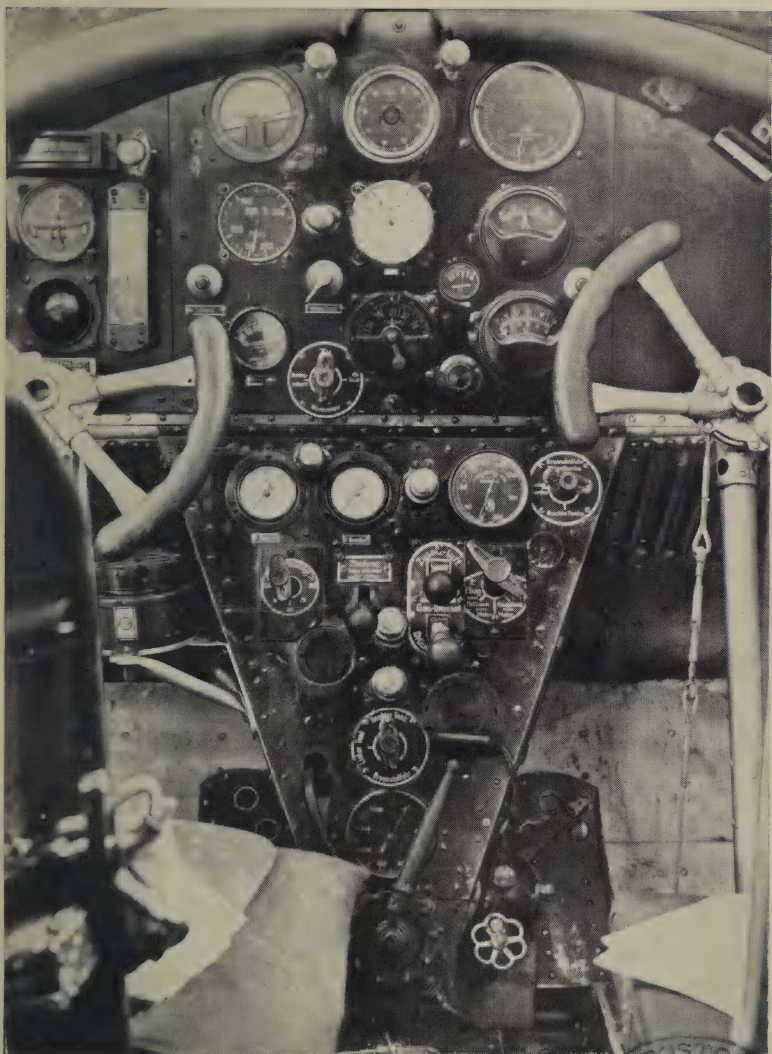
“Search for Bertram and Klausmann suspended stop all authorities consider further efforts useless.”

‘From that day onwards you were officially given up. Your fate was sealed. A week later, on the 13th June, a native came to the police-station in Wyndham, and handed us a letter from the Drysdale mission station. A padre from the station had found traces of you! Let me tell you how it happened:

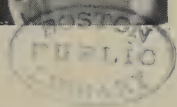
‘The Drysdale mission station owns a motor-boat. For two years this boat never left the station. At the end of May of this year the motor gave trouble, and it was decided to sail round the coast to Wyndham in order to have the boat overhauled. Please bear in mind that it was the first time for two years that the

boat had gone along the coast. In Wyndham the padre – Cubero is his name – was told that two German pilots had been lost in a flight over the Timor Sea. The padre was just as convinced as the rest of the world that the fate of the two men was sealed. After a few days' stay in Wyndham the motor-boat proceeded back to the mission station and anchored in a sheltered creek. To the amazement of the padre a native came on board and showed him a strange object. The native stated that he had come from up-country to the coast that day to fish, that he had seen on the shore the footprints of two white men, had followed them to the creek, and that then all the traces had disappeared in the water. The native left it at that and went fishing. Next morning he had wandered back inland again, because there had been no drinking water at the coast. While fishing he found a metal box which seemed strange to him. It was a cigarette-case with the letters H.B. engraved on it. To the padre it was perfectly clear that he had found a clue which might explain the whereabouts of the missing airmen. Messengers were sent poste-haste with the news to Wyndham. It was on the thirtieth day after the forced landing.'

The constable's words were like a prayer to me. I realised the great truth behind them, and once again repeated the facts of our deliverance. You who read these lines shall decide for yourselves what to call such a happening. You will remember that when swimming a creek in the early days after the landing we had lost all our baggage, when the crocodiles pursued us. A cigarette-case out of the baggage had been washed ashore. A native came to the coast only for a few hours, to fish. This native found our footprints and the cigarette-case. In the evening the black man sat on the beach unable to make anything of the metal thing in his hands; next morning he intended to go



Instrument board of the "Atlantis"



back inland to his camp. And on that same day, for the first time for two years, a motor-boat came along the coast anchored in the very creek where the native was, and on the very same night! You may call it chance or you may call it a miracle, you may call it what you will – Klausmann and I know to what Power we owe our lives.

‘And then the search was resumed more energetically than ever. Naturally there was no hope of finding you alive, the footprints were weeks old, and no man can live in the wilds without food or water. An aeroplane cruised over the coast and found your machine the very next day. You told me that the aeroplane flew over you. A motor-boat was sent out from Wyndham, and it reached the plane in another two days. The message which you had left in the cabin-window was found: that you had rigged up one of the floats as a sailing-boat, and that you intended sailing along the coast. I myself set out with two companions, Smith of the Forest River Mission and the young groom Tom, and we traversed the wilderness in forced marches. The country in which you landed is about as large as your own Germany, and we were looking for two men in it! You may well call it a miracle that we found you. In that huge territory there are barely 200 natives. It is called a ‘native settlement’, I know, but conditions of life there are too bad even for the black children of nature. Very rarely, if ever, would a white man stray into those parts, and only at the two mission stations are there missionaries who have taken upon themselves the difficult task of converting the natives.

‘Both stations sent their natives out, and those chaps did in the end find you. We were camping not far from here – perhaps about twelve miles away – a black runner came into camp. He had seen traces of us, and he told us where we could find the two

white men. And now here we are, and the great agony is over!’

The rest is soon told. On the same night as Marshall arrived, messengers were dispatched to Wyndham. The two blacks carried the news of our miraculous escape to the telegraph-office. After another four days a motor-boat from Wyndham anchored in the creek, and on the fifty-third day after our forced landing the story of our long period of suffering on the north-west coast of Australia came to an end.

On the morning of this fifty-third day two men stood on the landing-stage in Wyndham, two men who had come back from Hell, back to civilisation, to a new and great life. One of them was sick. His nerves had not been proof against the terrible privations and even less so against the overwhelming joy of the rescue. My good mate Klausmann was very seriously ill; but I had good hopes for him, for if it had pleased God to save us alive from the wilds of Australia, it would be an easy matter for Him to restore my companion’s health one day!

I have now written our great Australian experience, and I trust that I have succeeded in giving a faithful account of the happenings of those fifty-three days. At the end of this account I shall give the contents of the wire which the two black messengers carried to the Wyndham telegraph-office. It was the telegram of the rescue, the first greeting to my mother, my home and the world – it was the telegram of my great avowal: ‘Rescued and well! God lives! Hans.’

PART III
HOMEWARD BOUND

CHAPTER I

BACK TO THE WILDS ONCE MORE

‘So you really intend to return home by air? Why not book a passage in a comfortable steamer and let the sun give you a good baking during the five weeks’ sail through the Tropics? I have heard that yourself and Klausmann had been offered a free passage to Europe, and I also know that all the experts warn you against the attempt to salve the *Atlantis*. I am sure the whole world would understand if, after your fifty-three days in the wilds, you gave flying the go-by for a time, and took a rest from such strenuous ways.’

The captain was not so far wrong and the advice was excellently meant; but for me there was no other course possible: I meant to try to get the *Atlantis* away from the north-west coast of Australia, and I meant to fly back to Germany!

‘Well, well! That’s you all over. Once you make a plan, you are not to be persuaded to give it up. In any case I wish you the best of luck. Come along to the chart-room, will you, we’ll have a look in the log-book and see what time of day it was that we sailed past the creek of your forced landing three months ago. I cannot understand how it was possible that nobody on board saw your small craft drifting on the high seas, and it is all the more incomprehensible to me, because we had orders to search the north and the north-west coasts for the two lost airmen.’

I sat for a few more hours with the friendly captain of the *Koolinda*. It was a strange feeling to be on board the ship that had passed us by at a distance of only a few hundred yards, without seeing our signals of distress. In the log-book we saw that the *Koolinda* had passed Cape Bernier on May 29th at 3.30 in the afternoon – and close by, unseen by the ship, there drifted a rudderless boat with two despairing men!

The time of day – afternoon – perhaps explained the fact that we had not been seen: nobody goes on deck at such an hour unless compelled to. Possibly the officer of the watch was at that very time making entries in the chart-room, and doubtless the sailor at the helm had eyes only for the course he was steering, and looked neither to right nor left. The *Koolinda* was the only ship that sailed regularly every two months – in the season every month – round the north-west coast of Australia.

Two months had passed since Klausmann and I returned to civilisation, and these two months had presented me with about as many difficulties as our fifty-three days in the Australian Bush. I shall have to give my readers a telegraphic account of what happened:

Klausmann had to go to hospital in Wyndham. His nerves were quite shattered. As for myself, I could not lie in my well-deserved bed in hospital or hotel, because from the first minute such masses of work waited for me. I am proud to say that I had only one hour in hospital, and that hour was utilised for washing the dirt from my body, having a haircut and a shave, and putting on fresh clothes. Then the work began!

During the first three days more than 500 telegrams arrived. It was impossible to leave unanswered all those messages – some of them important. I had to

send reports and replies in all directions. Then arrangements had to be made for Klausmann, and for the salvage of the *Atlantis*. But all that cost money, and my greatest difficulty after the rescue was that I was absolutely penniless. My money lay somewhere or other in the Bush or in the crocodile creek. The reader must on no account imagine that after the rescue we were inundated with offers of assistance. The whole world sent its congratulations, it is true, and it was wonderful to know that during those fifty-three days, and now after we had been rescued, we had the sympathy of our fellow-men; but in addition to the kind words there were, unfortunately, no offers of financial assistance such as would have been the most important thing at that moment. Only from one quarter did there come an offer of help, and I venture here to express my thanks to the Norddeutsche Lloyd, Bremen. This shipping company offered Klausmann and myself a free passage home, and was willing also to transport the plane to Germany free of charge, if the plane were in one of the larger Australian ports. And that was just the difficulty – to save the *Atlantis* and get her from the north-west coast. We had landed on the 15th May, in the Australian winter. In September the spring gales begin on the Timor Sea, so before September the plane would have to be removed from the creek of the forced landing. As you will remember, one float of the *Atlantis* was equipped as a boat and was smashed on the rocks. It was impossible to procure another float from Germany in so short a time, neither was it possible to build an under-carriage on to the plane, in order to start as a land-machine. The rocky coast would frustrate any attempt of that sort; finally I had to abandon the idea of salvage with a ship. The north-west coast of Australia is very little navigated and the chart inaccurate. For this reason ships

remain some eight or ten nautical miles off-shore. There was no possibility of towing the plane over that distance into the open sea.

Experts in Australia and elsewhere advised me to abandon my plane, and calmly allow the *Atlantis* to go to rust rather than stake a life on the salvage of her.

I am glad to think that I remained loyal to my old principle: that where there is a difficulty, there is also a way out of it. I procured the necessary funds; I settled Klausmann for some months in an Australian hospital, after which he had to be sent home to complete his cure among his own people. In the workshops of an Australian aviation company, I came across a float which, if not exactly what I required, might just enable me to bring the plane home.

I was on board the *Koolinda* which in two days would land me at the creek where the *Atlantis* lay. I had with me my Australian mechanic Sexton, the new float and enough provisions to last for months. Half the ship's hold was occupied with gifts from the generous Australian people.

Before coming to the creek of the forced landing the *Koolinda* would anchor in the Drysdale mission station creek. Every six months the missionaries at this lonely station receive news from the outer world. This time there would be among the *Koolinda*'s passengers a man anxious to greet the person who had been the means of saving his life – Father Cubero, who had found the cigarette-case and organised the search for us. I expected to see him next day.

Two hours after sunset we dropped anchor. Some solitary lights in the distance indicated the position of the mission station. The *Koolinda* was remaining in the creek till next morning.

The little lantern on the mast of the missionaries' cargo-boat cast its wavering light through the darkness.

There were strong arms rowing the boat and the searchlight showed me some well-known faces among the natives. At the helm was a short, black-haired man – Father Cubero! I leave you to imagine the greeting that followed. Cubero had to spend the night on his boat taking in the goods for the station. I wished to visit the station, so I set off for the shore in a row-boat with two natives.

Those two men never spoke a word, but their eyes were shining, and I felt that they knew very well they were rowing the pilot who had been found some time ago dying of hunger in the Bush, and that he had now come back, well and strong again, to offer his thanks.

There was a fire on the beach and three of the missionaries stood about it; they were amazed to see a stranger suddenly invade their solitude.

We sat together for many hours, but the time was all too short for what we had to tell. I heard about their life and their labours, and I am happy to be able in this book to sing the praises of these men and their self-sacrificing work. They devote their lives to others.

The missionaries spend ten years or more at the station, cut off from the world and in touch with natives only. Twice a year, when the *Koolinda* anchors in their creek, they catch a glimpse of the outer world; but when the boat has disappeared on the horizon they go back to the old round of Bush, natives, solitude, flies and work. The native is a free being and insists upon living in freedom. He scarcely understands that the missionaries wish to give him better conditions of living. Only with kindness of heart and the best sort of tact can any work be done here. Nothing is built up on theoretical religious teaching: the native is led to believe in Christianity from what he sees of the practice of it.

The black men live in small huts; during the day

they work in the garden and orchard, and in payment receive, in addition to daily food-rations, tobacco, clothes and blankets. Such things are Christmas-boxes for the simple nature-men. It is something quite new for them to be able to wrap themselves up in a warm blanket at nights. For months the black men go on working day after day; then suddenly they disappear, and may not be seen again for weeks. It is impossible for the missionaries to keep the natives entirely away from the Bush; but it argues a good deal of success that the black fellows return again and again to the mission, and that they wear with pride a small cross suspended round their necks. Children are educated in the primitive school on the station.

'Believe me, dear friend, it is time that we got into touch with the rest of the 50,000 natives who still live on our continent. Cannibalism is, unfortunately, not quite extinct. In the district where you landed there are some 200 natives, and so far we have only been able to convert half of them. You may consider yourself lucky that you were found by our people and that the reports which we heard some time ago were not correct.

'I may tell you that we firmly believed you had been eaten. Some time before your rescue our boys reported that there was a story going in the Bush about two white "devil-devil" who had come from the sky, and that these two "devil-devil" would have to be killed and roasted. When you landed after the night of gale on the Timor Sea, you met a native who was one of the savages of the country. It was lucky for you that you were able to get away from that man and his tribe by flying farther on for another twenty minutes, until fuel shortage forced you to land the second time. The savages followed you, found the plane after some days, and saw the two "devil-devil"

working on a boat. In other words, you were never alone in the creek of the forced landing, several native savages were all the time sneaking round you. I cannot understand why the fellows did not kill you. Later you left the creek in your boat and sailed out into the open sea, and from that moment all traces of you were lost.'

I need not tell you that a cold shudder went down my spine while the good Father was talking. I have one statement to make regarding the chance to which we owed our lives: when working on our boat we were all that day in a sort of fancy-dress because of the flies. We wore flying-helmets, goggles and even had scarves tied over our faces, so it is quite comprehensible that in the eyes of the natives we should have appeared to be devils!

'When Marshall came with his police patrol to the Forest River mission station – the second station in our district – an old woman told him that two white men had been seen on the coast a few days previously, and that they had been speared and eaten. The woman even knew the names of the murderers, and from that moment Marshall dragged several natives on chains around with him until he found you.'

The Father's last words were no news to me, for a report that Klausmann and I had been killed and eaten by the aborigines had one day been circulated by the Press.

Before I went back on board the *Koolinda* I was conducted by the Fathers to the native camp. Our black friends sat with us by the camp-fire and beamed when the Fathers told them in their own language of my gratitude and the admiration of the whole world for their Samaritan-like work.

Then I departed, leaving the lonely station and the white and the black men to whom I owed my life. In future it will be my task ever and

again to talk of the selfless, sacrificial labours of the missionaries. And what their black sons did for Klausmann and me is the best proof of the success of their activities.

CHAPTER II

THE SALVAGE OF THE 'ATLANTIS'

'LOOK over there, that is Cape Bernier.'

There was no need for the Captain to tell me that – I knew that coast only too well. Three times have I had the same view of the rocky waste from the sea: the first time after our stormy flight over the Timor Sea – and glad we were to greet it then! The next time, a fortnight later when we drifted in our rudderless boat on the open sea. By that time we knew the desolation of the land, and how little was to be expected of it; but all the same, during those terrible days at sea, our one thought was how to get back on shore again, to feel firm ground beneath our feet, to be able to stretch ourselves on the earth. Now the same coastline was before me for the third time. I had come of my own free will to try to salve my *Atlantis*.

Our creek was not known on the charts, which are very inaccurate for this coast. We attempted to locate the bay through the glasses, and the *Koolinda* was carefully piloted closer in-shore.

'Take another look through the glasses. We need search no further; the smoke on the coast tells us all we want to know.'

Sure enough, like a gigantic finger, the smoky pillar rose in the air, showing us the way to our creek, telling us that men were waiting for us at the plane and giving me the wonderful certainty that during the

long months of my absence the *Atlantis* had been carefully guarded. Here I must explain that when we were taken to Wyndham in the motor-boat I asked the natives to go to the plane, and camp in the creek until my return. I promised to be back for the salvage of the machine in two weeks at the latest, and the natives promised me to watch over the plane for those two weeks and to give a helping hand in the salvage. I did not keep my promise; I had been away ten weeks, and I had not the slightest idea that I should find a soul near the plane. Bear in mind that there was no water in the vicinity! However, the column of smoke told me that my friends had kept their word in spite of everything and that they had not forsaken the plane. Shame at my long delay almost choked me; but at the same time I had the proud consciousness of being able to give fresh proof of the moral greatness of the Australian aborigine.

The *Koolinda* anchored five or six miles from the shore, and sent off the motor-boat and two life-boats. Petrol-tins and water-cans were stowed in the boats together with sacks of provisions and equipment.

'If we have heard nothing of you in ten days' time we shall keep a look-out on the coast here on our return,' the captain assured me as he departed. 'So the best of luck for the salvage and safe-journey on your return flight. You should think about that shipping offer again. There are no rafters in the air, mind you!' I could not find the correct reply to this and was in no mind just then to argue with the captain as to the respective merits of air- and sea-travel, so I gratefully took leave of him. Now for the creek, now for the *Atlantis*! In addition to the mechanic Sexton and myself, there were three officers and five seamen in the boat, and they would all help to get the baggage ashore.

The next few minutes were rather a strain on my

nerves. In what state was I going to find the *Atlantis*? For four and a half months she had been lying on an absolutely unprotected coast. Of course the machine had been dragged up on the sand at high water, but Klausmann and myself could not possibly have dragged it higher up on the land. Twice daily – at flood-tide – the under-portion of the *Atlantis* stood in water, whilst spray and above all, the dangerous salt air, were a continual menace to body and wings. And in addition to all that, the machine had to be standing the whole time on one leg – or rather one float – and only the scantiest of anchorages prevented it from drifting into the open sea.

We were at the entrance to the creek, sailing round the last rocks. We could see right to the background, to the small sandy beach behind, and there the sun flashed a greeting to us off the silvery wings of my good, faithful *Atlantis*. The Junkers seaplane had stood the severe test of those months on the north-west coast of Australia just as well as its crew; it had given an absolutely convincing proof of the excellence of German workmanship!

We sailed in as far as we could; on the shore the natives were leaping and yelling for joy, racing along the beach, and wading out to meet us. They came alongside; the 'Rescuer', the 'Hunter', the 'Old Man' and our 'Bodyguard' – all were together, and all had kept faith. Before the officers and sailors I shed tears of gratitude and joy, and was not ashamed!

The shallow water forced us to anchor about 100 yards out; we had to carry the goods to land through knee-deep water, and at this point I must tell you a funny story:

We had been carrying sacks of provisions and articles of equipment for about an hour, and had waded out to the motor-boat for the last time, each one was carrying

two petrol-tins on his shoulder. I was the last to leave the boat and I was following the officers and seamen at a distance of a few yards. Suddenly I caught sight of the back-fin of a shark quite close to me! I must confess that just at first I was terrified, but then I told myself that only a very young shark could live in this shallow water, and that it would not be dangerous. In its curiosity the shark was swimming up to the group of sailors; I shouted a warning; the brave seafarers stood as if petrified for a moment, staring horror-struck at the fin which was threading its way among them. Then they threw their burdens into the water and rushed back to the boat. The little shark could not frighten such old hands as the natives and myself, although we did have a few extra hours' work collecting the petrol-tins which were swimming about merrily in the water. The motor-boat with its brave crew disappeared at the entrance of the creek, and to tell the truth, I was not sorry that I was to be shut off from the outer world for a few days and able once more to sit by the camp-fire with my black friends.

We worked steadily for three days and nights, fixed the new float, dug a canal to bring the plane into the deep water, replenished petrol, oil and water-tanks, and then the *Atlantis* was ready to start, although somewhat crooked and limping on the new and much smaller float.

My black friends helped me loyally and well; without their help my mechanic and myself would never have been able to accomplish the work. The eight natives obeyed most willingly the orders of Fred, the half-caste who had been sent to the plane ten weeks previously from the Forest River mission station with instructions to see that everything was all right and to wait for my return. In the few hours' rest which

we allowed ourselves, Fred related to me what had gone on during the ten weeks:

Water had had to be carried from a distance of twelve or fifteen miles; the few kangaroos to be found at the coast were soon killed and eaten. The natives had to go hunting far inland all the time, and drag their slain beasts many miles. But never did it occur to one of those loyal souls to abandon the plane. When I asked why they had all expected my return with such conviction, the half-caste Fred replied in broken English:

'White man asked us to do so – and so we did.' The words were uttered in a perfectly matter-of-fact tone. It was a matter understood that what they had promised to do for the white man they did.

Fred had with him his good friend Hector, also from Forest River. Hector is known in Australia as 'the Runner'. This man performed the astounding feat of traversing 100 or 120 miles of Bush in thirty-six hours. I shall tell you how it happened:

After Marshall's arrival we wrote the wires for home the first night, and next morning dispatched two messengers to the telegraph-office. The distance through the Bush may be estimated at between 100 and 120 miles, and at the same time one must remember how rough were the ways. When Klausmann and I first landed we were not able to do more than three to six miles a day when we were searching for water! I asked the two messengers to go as quickly as they could to Wyndham, I wished to spare my mother another moment's anxiety if possible. The natives promised to do the distance in two and a half days – something like forty miles a day through the wildest Bush and forest country. They left the camp at dawn.

In the evening of the same day Klausmann's condition grew worse. We feared it was desperate, and

decided to dispatch another runner to Wyndham. Hector was sitting at the camp-fire with us. Marshall told him in a few words how important the mission was, and that every minute was of consequence for the white man's life. Hector listened quietly and promised to do his best, the only provision that he took with him was a piece of tobacco! Next evening three natives ran through the street of Wyndham together. Hector covered about 120 miles in thirty-six hours, and arrived at the same time as the other two who had had a start of twenty-four hours.

When I returned to Wyndham, I did not meet Hector again. He had at once gone back to the Forest River mission station, and after that had proceeded to the *Atlantis* where with Fred and the others he had waited for two and a half months. I asked Hector also why he had done all this, and he replied as Fred had done: 'The white man asked me to do so, I promised, and I have done so.'

I am permitting myself to write nothing about the greatness of soul of those people; but I hope that I have given in my book good evidence for my friends, the aborigines of Australia!

The *Atlantis* lay ready to start, presently I should be saying good-bye. On the previous evening I had sat with my friends at the camp-fire for the last time. I felt almost as if I were leaving a bit of home behind me – man is always especially attached to the soil where he has suffered and fought.

We talked until late in the night, relating over and over again the great experience of the rescue. For the natives the events of the last few months had been the greatest happening in their lives, and I believe that at their camp-fires they will still talk about the *Atlantis* and the two pilots – or 'devil-devil'. I had to promise my rescuers that I should soon go back to

see them. I promised, and one day I shall keep my word.

This morning there was a great distribution of presents. In explanation I must say that the population of Australia sent me away with innumerable packets of presents for the natives, when I departed to see to the salvage of my plane on the north-west coast. Among the charitable gifts the most useful articles for the natives were warm clothes and blankets. I was delighted to be able to give my friends such things; but never in my life shall I forget the difficulties I had over their distribution. Just think: I had underclothing and articles of dress for the women; they accepted everything gratefully, viewed the strange objects from all sides, but had no notion what to do with them, for the black woman of the country knows about nothing but her loincloth! What was I to do but to explain the uses of petticoat and knickers. To make matters easier, I chose a 'lady' and dressed her from head to foot before the eyes of the others – a somewhat troublesome and thankless task!

I was pleased to have my aircraftman take a farewell photograph of me with the smart women. Then the men wanted to look particularly chic before the camera. I was unable, however, to persuade them to don trousers and jacket. In the opinion of my friends suits are all very well to warm them during the night, but so long as the sun shines, they feel much more at home in their bare skin. The one article of adornment which the men put on to be photographed, was a tie, and then – sheer excess – the chief sported the white boudoir-cap which I had thought would make a fashionable summer-hat for his wife!

At the very end I presented a concertina and seven mouth-harmonicas. I thought I was giving the natives a special treat in so doing and I can assure you that I was very glad to start up the motor of the plane in

a few minutes. Perhaps you can imagine the music, when seven mouths were sucking or blowing the air through seven different mouth-harmonicas, and the chief pulling at his concertina at the same time.

Full speed ahead! Up she goes! Not so easy as it sounds, with two floats of unequal sizes, one persistently dragging, and a left wing that dipped perilously, almost touching the water. However, I did get up at last and away from the water. The *Atlantis* was flying, and with what joy and triumph I guided my faithful plane out of the wilds and back to civilisation and life, I leave you to guess!

CHAPTER III

DANGERS OF HOSPITALITY

THIS chapter is to be written in praise of Australian hospitality, and at the same time I would give a word of warning to all pilots throughout the world: 'You must never land on the uninhabited Australian coast, and remain persistently hidden for weeks, for when you are found one day, you may easily fall a victim to the perils of hospitality!'

If anyone asked me about Australia now, I should like to embrace the main features of the country in a sentence: when I landed at the 'back door' of Australia, the wild north-west coast, I nearly perished from the rudeness of the land. When later I came to Australian civilisation, i.e. the 'front door' of the continent, the courtesy of the people nearly cost me my life.

I know from my travels the hospitality of the peoples of Asia, especially the Chinese, but I now maintain that the Australians beat all others in this respect. For four and a half months I was the 'victim' of Australian cordiality.

I shall have to tell my story in its proper sequence:

It begins right away in Wyndham whither we were conducted after our fifty-three days in the Bush. Wyndham is a small coastal township which for eight months of the year is almost empty and dead; but which during the remaining four winter months is kept busily employed working on the meat from

the great Australian cattle-ranches. During the season a few hundred seasonal workers live in the town.

After landing the first thing I did was to have a bath and a haircut and shave; then, feeling a new man, I sat on the veranda of the hospital. Needless to say, the whole population of the town came up to greet me. Most of the visitors unfortunately thought it their duty to regard me as a sick man. I had to put up with this, little as I liked it – I cannot stand being pitied. Presently up came a worker from one of the slaughter houses, he took a look at me and opined:

‘Well, my lad, you look a very decent, well-mannered cove, what about a good glass of beer?’

‘That would not be too bad, but I am inclined to think that after the fifty-three days on your beautiful coast I would do better to drink a glass of milk.’

‘Nonsense,’ replied the somewhat robust worker, ‘you are not a baby.’

And I drank the glass of beer with my host. Don’t forget that this was only two hours after our arrival and after fifty-three days of ‘desert-cure’. The worker looked a trifle astonished, all the same, and smote his thighs with delight, as he said:

‘If you could do that, you deserve to be a born Australian, a real “Dinkum Aussi”.’

From that time onwards I had a good name with the Australians. As ‘Dinkum Aussi’ I was a dyed-in-the-wool Australian, and I may say that I was proud of it. Nobody will take it amiss when I tell them that to me Australia, as the country of my new birth, had become my second home.

Three days’ stay in Wyndham – or rather in its telegraph-office – and then I flew as guest of the West-Australian-Airways from Wyndham along the west coast of the continent to Perth, the capital of Western Australia. The four days’ flight ought to have pre-

pared me for what was to follow in the ensuing months: at every aerodrome a crowd waited. Everyone wanted to shake hands with the 'new-born Dinkum Aussi', everyone wanted an autograph, everyone wanted to hear something about the fifty-three days, and above all everyone wanted to stuff provisions in the pockets of the starved pilot. Half the cabin was filled with parcels of gifts of every description. Had there been a forced landing, the crew of our machine would in no case have suffered from hunger.

In Perth I remained the first time only for a few weeks, preparing for the salvage of the *Atlantis*. Klausmann left for home from there. I afterwards fetched my plane from the north-west coast, and it flew – somewhat limpingly with its borrowed float – along the west coast as far as Perth. After my arrival I had the *Atlantis* put on wheels, and set out with the land-machine, for a 'gratitude flight round Australia'. From that moment, during four and a half months, I had not a single quiet minute. I shall give you a normal day's programme, and I don't believe you will envy me:

From 7–8.45 a.m.: signed in my room in the hotel, autograph-books which had come in the day before.

At 9 a.m.: start for a visit to a hospital.

9.15 to 10.30 a.m.: tour of all the wards; every patient expecting a word or two from me.

At 10.30 a.m.: a short breakfast in the Governor's room.

From 11 a.m. to 12.45 p.m.: Visit to three different schools. Children in each case assembled in large hall and anxious to hear the German pilot speak, to have him sign their autograph-books, and in every case eager to make him stay.

1 p.m.: Lunch with some big society, club, etc. A fairly long speech afterwards, possibly broadcast.

2.30 to 3.45 p.m.: Visit to the University – always a great deal of speechifying to the students.

4 p.m.: Tea with the Governor.

5.30 p.m.: Visit to a benevolent institution, store or the like.

7 p.m.: Talk on the wireless – subject fixed some days previously.

8–10 p.m.: Big lecture on the fifty-three days on the north-west coast of Australia.

After 10 p.m.: Visit to clubs, etc., or appearance as guest of honour at a ball.

About two o'clock in the morning a dog-tired guest of the Australian nation staggers to his bed.

Interspersed with all the foregoing there were thousands of other things: attendance at a thanksgiving service, laying of a wreath on a war-memorial, seeing the sights in the vicinity of the town, hundreds of private invitations which permitted of no refusal. And by day and night, on all occasions, at every hour, the Australian reporter! I may say that during my four and a half months in Australia I had not a moment that was not observed, that almost every gesture I made appeared in some form or other in the Press – and you will admit that in the long run that is worse than being placed under police surveillance.

Very unfortunately for me, I had to fly from town to town, that is to say, I had always to see that my plane was in perfect order, in addition to all my other jobs. When after a stay of four or five days in one town I had successfully completed the programme, I started out at a very early hour next morning, and for two or three hours I was a free man. Once in the pilot's seat, I could not be called upon to make a speech or to pay a visit. Then came the landing in the next town, and five minutes afterwards a piece of paper was being pressed into my hand, and on this

paper was drawn up the programme for the following few days, worked out to a minute.

Three German gentlemen had offered to accompany me, to see to questions of organisation, and to help me with my gigantic correspondence. One of these remained the whole time through at headquarters in Melbourne. One travelled in advance to the different towns, and the third accompanied me from place to place on the plane, attended to the most urgent matters, and had to stand by my side at all functions and take notes, etc., but he did not have to say a word all day long – not like me! Those three men had to change duties with one another every three weeks or so; they were quite exhausted with the exertion of rushing from one assembly-room to another. I maintain that there is no work so strenuous as to stand up in the public interest and be exposed to the enthusiasm of the masses. I dared not refuse any kind invitations, I wanted as far as possible, to shake hands with every inhabitant of Australia! I wanted to thank everyone personally for all they had done and all they had felt for the two lost German pilots. I wanted to tell every Australian about the aborigines of the country and break a lance for those friends of mine. But I wanted above all to do a little for the relations between my fatherland Germany and my second home Australia. As visible token of my task I carried on the flight of gratitude round Australia two flags – my old, weather-stained, German flag and the Australian flag.

At the close of this chapter I shall give you one more proof of the danger of excessive hospitality.

One afternoon my programme included a visit to the meeting of a women's association. I went, and was confronted by 400 or 500 ladies! I was not in the least nervous or shy, but I did feel somewhat uncomfortable for a moment or two. I breathed more

freely when the mayor put in an appearance to introduce me to the ladies. He performed the introduction, saying lots of nice things about me. According to him I was a perfect cavalier and nothing could daunt me – not even that assemblage! With that he excused himself and went off to fulfil an important engagement. In reality he was only making his escape, the coward, leaving me alone among those hundreds of women-folk.

Luckily I did not suffer from stage-fright, and I chatted away about all sorts of things quite happily. In an unguarded moment, however, I made a great mistake. I was in the habit, at every reception, of talking frankly of my joy at being restored to life after having looked death in the face for so long, and on this occasion I expressed the same joy, using these words:

‘Believe me, ladies, I am to-day so glad to be given back to life again that I should like to embrace every person I meet!’

The words died away. I was preparing to go on with my talk, when I became aware of some clearing of throats, whispering and scraping of chairs. Then I saw a couple of ladies getting to their feet; others followed. Then all the 400 or 500 began to advance upon the rostrum from every side – and I could not make a bolt for it, I could only gaze in wide-eyed terror at the threatening trouble!

I escaped with my life, but I assure you that I would rather fly for ten hours through the wildest gale than have to face for another ten minutes the cordiality of so many beautiful women.

CHAPTER IV

SETTING THE COURSE FOR EUROPE

A SENSATIONAL report went through the Australian Press:

'Bertram lost again. The German pilot disappeared from hotel three days ago, has not been found since.'

It was quite correct, I had at last withdrawn from the hurly-burly of publicity, and was staying somewhere on the coast in the vicinity of Melbourne. No one in the city knew my address or my telephone-number. I really had succeeded in giving the reporters the slip, and what a boon that was!

It was high time I had a little holiday. The last months had taken it out of me almost as badly as the fifty-three days on the north-west coast. I wanted a couple of weeks' rest, and in that time I would map out my flight back to Europe, to Germany, to my home!

I was preparing the *Atlantis* for a record flight between Australia and Europe. I intended to make an attempt to fly from the Australian coast to London in five days, and to have on board with me samples of all the Australian products. The flight would serve the purpose of a combined propaganda of Germany's Junkers aircraft and Australia's manufactures; it would also demonstrate the possibility of the establishment of an air connection for passengers and mails between the two continents.

I had had large petrol and oil tanks built into the

Atlantis to increase her radius of action. The plane could now remain for seventeen hours in the air at a stretch. If the trip of 10,000 miles was to be accomplished in five days, the *Atlantis* would have to do 2,000 miles a day.

I had to have another pilot, and I found him in the person of G. U. Allan, chief pilot of the Australian National Airways, Sydney. He was an excellent pilot, a marvellous navigator, and above all, an extraordinarily good mate. He was Scottish and known to all and sundry as Scottie.

The departure from Australia was no easy thing for me; I was leaving my second home and many good friends. On my outward trip, seven months previously, I had left Thom and Lagorio in Java, intending to pick them up again on my return flight. But of course they had long ago gone back to Germany, and the last of my crew, poor old Klausmann, had likewise returned home, so I was alone with my plane. We had both been through a strenuous time and were looking forward joyfully to being at home for Christmas.

On the evening or the 8th December everything was ready for the start; the following morning at 5 a.m. we were beginning the flight Melbourne-Alice Springs; then next day we should fly from Alice Springs to Port Darwin. With one intermediate landing we intended flying 2,250 miles across Australia from the south coast to the most northerly harbour. When we reached Port Darwin we should have our last rest-day, then on the 12th December, at 5 a.m., local time, we intended starting for the record-flight Australia-England.

The military aerodrome Point Cook, Melbourne, on the 9th December, at 4 a.m. was bright as day with searchlights; the doors of the great hall were opened

wide; there was a careful last-minute inspection of motor and steering instruments, then 'All clear!'

Many good friends came to see me off, bringing me the last greetings of the Australian government and the Australian people. Once again I thanked the hospitable country; I summed up my opinion of it in a sentence: 'I landed at the "back door" – the inhospitable north-west coast, and in the first fifty-three days I had not a good word for the country. Then I came to civilisation, to the "front door", and learnt to esteem and to love Australia.'

At five o'clock punctually we started, setting the course for Alice Springs, Port Darwin, Europe. Of the first two flying-days I need only say that crew and motor worked well together, that the navigation over the 2,250 miles of Australian inland was hard, but we reached Port Darwin up to time. That part of the test had been carried through successfully. Now, after a day's rest and one more final examination of motor and plane, we should start for Europe.

CHAPTER V

A STOWAWAY ON BOARD

A THUNDER-STORM over the Timor Sea on the morning of our start for Europe was just what I might have expected from my old enemy; but I was determined not to postpone the flight, otherwise the timetable so carefully worked out would be thrown out of gear.

The rain was coming down in torrents; I trembled to think what the condition of the flying-ground would be – supposing it was too soft for the take off! We arrived there at 4.15 a.m., and found the *Atlantis* there before us. There was no hall for her to shelter in, so she had spent the night in the open, as she had so often done already, and under the guard of a police-officer. The latter had disappeared by the time we arrived, probably it was too wet for him.

Everything was wet. Water dripped from the wings, ran off the motor-hood, penetrated the tarpaulin cover over the pilot's seat.

At 4.40 the engine was started up and allowed to run warm for a little. The plane, motor and instruments were examined carefully under the light of pocket-torches.

At 4.55 'All clear'. We climbed into the cockpit. The motor was switched on for a minute to both magnetos, with the full number of revolutions. The instruments were all alive, vibrating and ready. So were we. Brakes off and away!

'Cheerio, good-bye!' 5 a.m. start.

In front of us glimmered a solitary light, showing the start-direction and the end of the flying-ground. It showed up sharply against the inky black background of the trees and the thunderclouds.

The machine rolled heavily, the wheels sank in the soft ground. My eyes had to be busy everywhere at once, watching the light at the end of the flying-ground, the number of revolutions, the oil and fuel pressure gauges, the speed-indicator!

Fifty, then seventy, then eighty km. speed. We had to have eighty-five to ninety in order to get the machine up. The indicator trembled, the light came with surprising suddenness – and trees behind it thirty feet high. I had to keep my head.

Slowly I pulled at the elevator control. The bumps ceased, the indicator sprang to 100 and 110 km. We were flying! Another backward pull, so that the machine should get properly under way. The light was now ahead of us, and behind it a black wall. 120 km. speed. I gave a pull that sent the plane up over the trees; then a little obstacle-race: trees, meadows, houses, the harbour-mole, and at last we had managed it. Below us lay the open sea and no more obstacles, only a stretch of water of about 530 miles.

There was no time for rejoicing or anything else the moment after the start. The thunder-storm kept us too busy. The thunder was inaudible, of course; but the lightning blazed away in grand style. We might almost have done without any other light. For some time we flew by the instruments; there would not be any daylight before six o'clock.

Just before six – the minute before it had been pitch dark – the thunder-storm front seemed cut clean away, and daylight glimmered ahead of us. We were flying into a clear morning.

Now, at last, we had really started. What could possibly go wrong after this? Absolutely nothing, if we had any luck at all. We had drawn up an exact programme of work for the five days' record-flight. In bad weather both pilots were to be in the cockpit; in good weather they were to relieve each other every hour. The free man would go through the communicating-door into the cabin, open the floor-flap there, take a downward perpendicular observation, calculate the drift, fix the course by the compass, make entries in the log, and then lie down in the hammock slung from wall to wall. Before lying down he had to tie a string to his arm, the other end of the string went to the pilot's seat. When relieving-time approached the pilot would give a sharp tug to the string and so wake his mate.

Shortly before eight o'clock, when we had covered half the distance over the sea, I was surprised to see Scottie crawl into the cockpit. He gave me a push, and pointed back into the cabin. I was perplexed, this zeal for work was unnatural – he might have slept for another ten minutes – was it some sort of Scots joke? No, his face looked serious enough, there was something in its expression that puzzled me. Again he pointed back into the cabin. What on earth could have happened? Was the big tank leaking? I would have to see for myself. I left Scottie at the controls, opened the door, prepared to go through and – had a shock that took my breath away. I did not know whether I was awake or asleep, for there, on the back bench of the cabin, sat huddled a man! a real, live human being was with us in the plane!

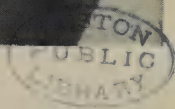
I was accustomed to most things, but this was something quite special, it was amazing! On a plane you are more or less prepared for engine trouble, or you might have an oil or petrol leak or even an accident to the wing; but to find a man on your plane during



The start for home



Bertram is very lonely . . .





the flight, who apparently was not on it at the start, is a bit too much!

What had happened? Scottie told me later. I will try to give you the story in his own words:

'I was lying in the hammock, dozing, thinking about nothing in particular, or mebbe thinking that we were half-way across the water, when something happened at the back wall of the cabin. The little trap-door leading to the tail of the machine moved, and – would you believe it, a hand appeared! My boy, you can take it from me, I am no that easy scared, but I thought: now it's all up, somebody or other has come up out of the Timor Sea to fetch us. I at once thought of the daft talk when we were saying good-bye in Sydney, you remember, when the boys asked us: "What would you two like us to throw in for you if you come down in the Timor Sea?" and you wanted a flag and I wanted a bottle of whisky. Now I thought the boys will have to come, right enough, with that bottle of whisky. But just then, after the hand on the cabin-wall, there followed a coat-sleeve, the door banged open, and to the coat-sleeve a man was attached! Believe me, my one idea was to throw him overboard. I must have looked as if I meant that too, for he was green and yellow.'

And green and yellow he still was, when I shouted some question at him. He was squatting on the seat, trembling with fright, no doubt expecting to be sent flying through the cabin-door any moment. As for his appearance, he wore tattered trousers, a shirt, a jacket and a pair of down-at-heel shoes – that was all. He had no passport, no money, no idea where we were flying to, and no idea what was to happen to himself afterwards. He had simply thought he would fly with us, and during the night had climbed under the awning of the pilot's seat through the cabin into the tail of the plane. The policeman at the Port Darwin

aerodrome had disappeared during the thunder-shower, so this poor wretch had crouched in the tail of the plane for three hours before the start and two and a half hours during the flight. It was a good thing that neither he nor we knew that he was sitting among the steering gear. He only needed to turn round once and the machine would have been put out of action!

Well, well, that danger was safely past, but I should have to do something about it. I assumed an official expression, opened the log-book, and bawled into his ear questions as to his name, birth and all the rest of it. It was very difficult making myself understood above the din of the motor; however, I managed to fill a whole page of the log-book after what seemed an eternity. Then I turned over the page, and could scarcely believe my eyes – I laughed as I had seldom laughed before – Scottie had put the fellow through exactly the same cross-examination, and filled two pages of the log-book with personal details and all manner of nonsense.

At that moment the situation was saved. I had a brilliant idea. The Australia government had given me samples of all the Australian industrial products to take with me on my record-flight to England. I sat down forthwith and wrote the following telegram:

‘Sincerest thanks for gift of samples of Australian products stop have indeed on board a sample of every Australian product.’

We were in excellent spirits when we flew over the South Sea that day. It was the same way as I had come seven months previously. We had an intermediate landing and short stay at Bima, then on again to Soerabaja, Java. The stowaway flew 1,375 miles with us; it was more than enough for him, considering

that this was his first flight. He was air-sick in proportion! We landed in Soerabaja by night and there said good-bye to our friend. The Timor Sea was well behind us; in a few hours we should be on the way again.

CHAPTER VI

‘THERE’S MANY A SLIP –’

A FRIEND in Soerabaja, anxious to keep me another day there, reminded me that the date fixed for the start was the 13th. But I refused to alter it, as I could not afford to shove in a rest-day in a record-flight. As it was, the seven hours’ stay in Soerabaja was a trifle long, and only arranged in order that we should have fewer hours of night-flying in the rain-zone at that particular season.

We intended starting next morning at three, two hours before the dawn, and had been busy fuelling the plane. She had 1,300 litres of petrol on her – was that another thirteen?

I was rather perturbed about the flying-ground which, at no time too grand, was during the wet season a regular morass. I heard, however, that in the middle of the ground there was a dry fairway, dry in all weathers, and that the plane would be towed to it and could have a good take off.

We had two hours of sleep – with the added luxury of having undressed – and arrived at the flying-ground at 2 a.m. There were some friends to see us off. I learned afterwards that they were thirteen in number!

The motor was started, the brakes removed and we prepared to get under way. The machine worked heavily in the soft ground and stuck twice. It was difficult even with the assistance of head-lamps to find

the dry fairway, as the whole of the flying-ground was overgrown with grass. Some mechanics came to our assistance, kindly pointing out the good starting-way. The machine was turned accurately to face the lights, so it must have been standing in the middle of the dry fairway, if what the mechanics told us was correct. But it was not correct: they had been twenty yards out in their estimate!

There were 700 yards of black, flat plain before us, then a ditch, two yards deep by two and a half yards wide, all round the flying-ground, behind that again 100 yards level country and then trees. The machine weighed 2,600 kg., so it was 100 kg. under the permissible starting-weight. On good ground 200 yards of a take off was sufficient. We had 700 yards here, surely it ought to do.

The machine rolled like a drunken man. Our eyes sought the point of convergence of the searchlights; our feet were busy with the rudder controls. The speed-gauge showed only forty to fifty km. How slowly we were getting under way! We could not see what was underneath, everything was pitch dark. Was that the fairway? Strange that water should be splashing on both sides. Sixty kg. speed, but 400 yards already used up to attain it. The greatest care had to be exercised, it was a matter of seconds. Should I switch off? Was it a false start? Slowly the machine grew lighter as the speed increased; the wheels rose from the mud. Sixty-five km. - the indicator trembled on seventy, a little bit more and I could give a cautious pull back. If only we were once in the air the machine would immediately get up speed. I had no fears about the trees, but the ditch was another matter! Now seventy km. and scarcely 100 yards ahead of us the lights. It was the highest time we were off the ground. I gave a cautious pull.

What was that? Were we flying? No, no! The indicator went back to sixty-five km!

Gas off! The ditch! Would the machine stop before that? Impossible – too late! To right and left the lights flicked over and under, and blinded us. Then dense darkness ahead of us, and a baffling uncertainty and after that the ditch. We were heading for it. I had a vision of the end – the crash into the ditch, burst tanks, petrol on the hot motor, the blaze, and then finis!

But it could not be! My brain worked furiously. Into my mind flashed something about falling sideways – some hint I had once had from a ski-ing instructor.

The plane raced the last yard or two to the ditch. I put the gas on hard – then turned it off, turned the ignition off also; there was a black hole ahead of us, a little to one side. Then a crash, the sound of tearing metal as the machine slipped sideways over the ditch and eight to ten yards farther on. I heard the grinding noise of metal on stone, and then came an unearthly stillness!

Horrible hours of despair followed. What had I done to deserve all these knocks at the hands of fate? *Atlantis* – buried continent – was the name unlucky from the start? These and other sick fancies chased each other through my mind, as I saw all my hopes and dreams fade away. No home-coming at Christmas for me after all! And all those months the thought of home had been like a prayer to me!

It took me days to find myself again. I wondered whether to pack myself and my broken-winged *Atlantis* on to a ship and go home by water, or stay and make another attempt, raise the money for repairs and fly back to Germany.

I chose the latter course. Now I shall pass over the

next few months of hard work, months during which I managed to raise funds for the costly financing of repairs to the plane. I intended to fly back to Germany alone. Allan had had to go back to Australia in the meantime, as his leave had expired.

On the evening of the 10th April, 1933, the *Atlantis* stood ready to start on the Soerabaja flying-ground. We were starting next morning at three local time. On both sides of the plane I had painted a big, red arrow, and over the arrow written the words ‘Home-ward Bound’! In a record-flight, in the best possible time, we intended flying back to the new Germany!

CHAPTER VII

THE HOMEWARD FLIGHT

ON Tuesday, the 11th April, 1933, at 3 a.m., local time, I started my solo flight for home from Soerabaja. I hoped to do the 8,750 miles in six or seven days, and arrive in Berlin on the following Sunday or Monday in time for Easter.

It was a very dark start – thunder about – and the full moon only peeped occasionally through the black clouds; but within me there was a courage and strength that was more than equal to any difficulty, for I was at last starting for home, and I was determined that nothing more should come between me and success.

The Soerabaja flying-ground was wet again, but this time I had taken the precaution of fuelling for only a few hours, so that the plane might start as lightly as possible. For this reason also I should have to make an intermediate landing at Batavia – only about 420 miles away – which I hoped to reach at sunset.

The intermediate landings were a good deal of a tax on me. Each time they meant tanking, letting off oil and pumping on fresh oil, examining and greasing the motor; above all, they meant an unpleasant loss of time. The flying-time proper, from Soerabaja to Berlin would be eighty-five hours. I should stick to that carefully, marking off each hour as it passed in my log. Every landing meant more

work and wastage of energy, as I was my own mechanic and tanker; all the same, possibly the landings would be a welcome change for me, and prevent my drowsing off to sleep with the never-ceasing drone of the motor.

I landed at Batavia at 6.30 a.m., having done the 420 miles in three and a half hours. It had been a strenuous flight with rain all the way. Good friends were meeting me at Batavia, but I had not a great deal of time to devote to them after seeing to my plane, and at 7.30 I was off once more for Alor Star, a distance of 1,030 miles which I still had to do that day.

I flew all day over dense forests, rice-fields and sea, and the whole time I was haunted by the terror that something might go wrong with my engine, and that I should again be doomed to failure. Nothing untoward occurred, however. I arrived at Alor Star in due course, and had thus done 1,450 miles on the first day of my return flight.

Alor Star lay below. I twice circled over it in an attempt to locate its flying-ground, but in vain. My maps stated that the ground lay four miles to the north-west of the centre of the town. I flew to the centre of the town, set the course due north-west, and still saw no sign of flying-ground. Again and again I did this, until I began to think my sight was defective – possibly after the long day's strain!

Presently I realised that my stock of petrol would not hold out much longer. If I did not soon find the place, I should have to come down in a rice-field and take my chance. I had to muster all my nerve to come to this decision, but finally I did manage to land without mishap on a minute rice-field. Some hours later a few men came out to see me across the rice-fields, and they told me with a pitying smile that the flying-ground was not four miles north-west, but seven

miles north-east of the town. In other words, my fate had hung on a small misprint!

Alor Star, 12th April, start at 7.30 a.m. local time. I was furious, because through the stupid error of the previous day I had been forced to depart from my carefully-planned time-table. At dawn, instead of flying out of the town, as I had intended, I had had to move the *Atlantis* to the flying-ground, so I had had very little sleep indeed, most of the night being taken up with the removal of heavy articles from the plane, so that it might start more easily from the tiny rice-field. The distance to Akyab, my destination for that day, was 1,156 miles. This was no trifle, especially as ninety per cent of the route lay over mountains and sea. The eleven hours' flight provided me with work and to spare, but for all that, the time passed extremely slowly – the minute-hand of the clock moved with incredible deliberation. I tried not to look at it, tried singing, whistling, talking to myself. Then, when it seemed to me as if hours must have passed since I last looked at the clock, I would take a look – and find that the minute-hand had crawled a miserable couple of minutes!

Akyab was reached at 6.15 p.m. I had flown about 2,600 miles in two days, barely one-third of the total distance that I had to cover. Behind me lay Java, Sumatra, the South Sea, the Equator. I had that day passed over Burma with its capital Rangoon. Akyab was the first Indian town. Just before landing I had been toying with the idea of allowing myself a rest-day in Akyab. Immediately after the landing I found myself telling the man in charge of the aerodrome that I was starting off again at 1 a.m.

Night-start in Akyab on the 13th April, 1 a.m. local time. First destination Allahabad, 812 miles away.

Then, on the same day, a further lap to Karachi, 1,000 miles on. I wanted to do a total of 1,812 miles that day.

While endeavouring to laugh at superstition, I disliked the 13th. I also disliked the first two and a half flying-hours of that day, as they were spent over the Bay of Bengal which, you will remember, was an old enemy of mine.

The night was very dark; heavy rain-clouds obscured the full moon. I sought vainly for a light on the Bay below. Not one was visible. No sign of life at all on that expanse of water. Was the thirteenth going to be unlucky for me this time? Three times in my flying-career the thirteenth had brought me great misfortune and at the same time great good fortune. In the solitude of that night-flight memories were awake:

A good many years ago I was learning to fly under the instruction of the '*pour-le-mérite*' flyer, Paul Baumer, who has since crashed. I had just been allowed to go up alone, and was intensely proud of myself and my god-like prowess. I can remember it was on the thirteenth day of the month that I had to do my sixth solo-flight. I was to circle twice at a height of 900 feet round the Hamburg aerodrome.

I started, climbed to 600, then 750 feet, and became aware of a most unpleasant smell of petrol in the pilot's seat. I made a mental note to report the matter to the aircraftman when I got down again, but that it could be anything serious never occurred to me. I had just got up to the 900 feet, and was preparing to get into the curve, so as to circle the prescribed number of times round the aerodrome, when there was a curious bubbling sound in the carburettor, then a flame, and before I realised what was happening, the plane was all ablaze!

At this point I ought to say that inquiries later

revealed the cause of this fire to have been a breach in a petrol-pipe. In the first minutes of flight the petrol had bespattered the body and wings. Through the shaking of the running motor the breach in the pipe had grown larger, the carburettor could not absorb sufficient fuel, there were one or two faulty ignitions and in a moment the body and wings were in flames.

I was quite inexperienced and had no parachute. With the first flame two-thirds or more of the wings were already burnt. For a second or two I was astounded at the wonderful view through these burnt wings, but my astonishment soon passed away. The plane raced straight down, and I was strapped to my seat – on a petrol-tank with 200 litres of petrol!

Without reflection but in an instinct of self-preservation, I acted quite correctly. I undid the straps and sitting on the framework, clung to the controls for dear life. The earth was approaching with terrific speed, but I was glad of it. Instinctively I wrenched the control-stick backwards, not stopping to think that an aeroplane minus its wings would not obey my steering, but by a lucky chance the flames had not yet caught the wings at the end of the body, there were a few yards of wing-surface still intact, and the machine obeyed! A few feet above the earth the plane hung for seconds in the air, then the wings gave way, and I remember no more. I was told later that I had leapt from the machine just as the petrol-tank under my seat exploded. Baumer came up to me, to my surprise he did not kick up a row, but merely asked me whether I had now had enough of flying. I most decidedly had not! Seven minutes after the crash I was starting my seventh solo-flight and looking down from the air upon the burning shell of the unlucky plane.

That was my first experience of a thirteen. Then

came the Vizagapatam story and the loss of the *Friendship* in a monsoon gale on the Indian coast. Finally my *Atlantis* had crashed when starting from Soerabaja on the 13th December. So it was small wonder that on this, the 13th April, I had some misgivings on my night-flight over the Bay of Bengal.

I landed in Allahabad seven and a half hours later. The Bay of Bengal, Calcutta and half the distance across India lay behind me. I landed up to time at 8.40 a.m. and would be off again in half an hour. Everything was going splendidly, the tanks and engine were behaving well. At starting again I rolled a trifle when turning the plane in the right direction, and then, under the right wing, there was the sound of tearing metal: an iron flag-staff had torn a hole a yard long in the wing!

The 13th after all! I could have howled with rage and despair. Then I grew calmer. Perhaps the hole could be repaired. I was carrying on my record-flight only the merest necessities in the way of repairing materials – a short piece of metal and some rivets. Once again on a thirteenth I had good fortune in misfortune. The hole was mended in an hour and a half, the metal was just the right size for it. It was unfortunately too late now for the 1,000 miles' flight to Karachi – I was not taking the risk of night-landings on this flight.

I determined to make for Jodhpur which was about 560 miles from Allahabad by air. I should have to start earlier next night to arrive in Karachi at dawn.

The 560 miles across Central India were flown in accordance with programme. The orientation on this route was perhaps the most difficult of the whole flight, the country did not look very different from the Syrian desert.

I landed in Jodhpur at 5.55 p.m. The *Atlantis* had

flown 3,984 miles in three days. She still had 4,625 miles to do before she got home. I was more than ready for a sleep that night, and could fall asleep with the comforting thought that from the next day onwards the number of miles would be going downhill all the time!

Fourth day. Start in Jodhpur on 14th April at 1.30 a.m. local time. With an intermediate landing in Karachi I intended to fly 1,534 miles that day, landing in Bushire on the Persian Gulf at sunset. I had to make good the loss of the previous day.

Time still crawled for me, but the words 'Homeward Bound' were always in my ear, and gave me inspiration and courage. In the first days I had constantly been afraid, when flying over primeval forest and open sea, but now with every mile that I flew, those fears gave place to joy at the prospect of my return. I had to keep a tight hold on myself lest this joy should overmaster my reason.

I landed in Karachi after flying 422 miles at 6 a.m., and started at 7.10 a.m. for the distance of 1,112 miles to Bushire. From Karachi onwards I was flying over familiar country, and the remembrance of my former flights became very vivid now. The outstanding features that I recognised seemed like old friends, and gave me the assurance that I was all the time getting nearer to Europe.

A few minutes before sunset saw me landing in Bushire. The exact time was 7.10 p.m. I had been sixteen and a half hours in the pilot's seat and had 1,560 miles to my credit that day. In the four days I had done altogether about 5,520 miles. The 3,125 miles still before me had now no terrors for me – indeed I was sorely tempted to go on flying all that night and all next day; but I resisted the temptation, knowing that body and brain would be unequal to such a task.

I forced myself to go to sleep, and tried to curb joy and longing by the exercise of naked reflection.

Fifth day. Start in Bushire on 15th April at 1.10 a.m. local time. Destination Aleppo, a distance of 968 miles across the desert.

In the first part of my book I devoted three chapters to the desert, now I was traversing it in a single flight. It took me eleven hours to fly over the whole stretch of the dead land. For eleven hours I saw not one outstanding feature, any orientation was out of the question. I became a sort of machine myself, forbidding eye and brain to record impressions. At the end of the time I knew that I should see a railway-line crossing the desert and that Aleppo would be visible on the railway-line.

I found them both – the line and Aleppo – and I landed at 12.10 p.m. Everything had gone well except for the fact that I had taken two hours longer over the flight than I had allowed for on my timetable. There had been strong head-winds all the way. I therefore, with great regret, abandoned my original intention of flying on at once to Athens. It would have meant a night-landing, and I was still strong in my determination to avoid that at any cost.

On the 6th day, the 16th April, at 4.20 a.m. local time, I started from Aleppo for the flight to Athens, a distance of 806 miles.

This day's flight was such a trifle in comparison with the previous ones that it scarcely seems worth recording. One fact stood out, however. This was the day on which the *Atlantis* once more flew over European land – European water rather – the Mediterranean. The thought of flying the Mediterranean with a land machine with no chance of an emergency

landing had now no terrors for me. I had said good-bye to terrors. I knew that fate was at last smiling upon me!

I landed in Athens at 12.10 p.m. It was the first landing on European soil.

The last day. Start from Athens on 17th April, 1933, Easter Monday, at 3.30 a.m. local time – start on the last stage of the flight home!

The distance was 1,312 miles, and it might have been twice as far, for all I cared! In the *Atlantis* sat a man who was quite unable to curb his joy any longer. I shouted myself hoarse for hours. I had to do something to let off steam. The Balkan hills, then Belgrade, the Danube, Vienna, Bohemia, Prague – Europe in a procession below me; but I saw none of it – for once the beauties of Europe were a matter of indifference to me. I stared at the clock, counted the hours, counted the minutes, waited only for one moment!

It was 3.35 p.m. Before me I could see the windings of the Elbe; in two or three minutes I should be crossing the German frontier. Those minutes passed. Below me was a wood – or was it a group of houses? Nothing very out of the way, at all events, but in my life I had never seen a lovelier sight than on this 17th April, 1933, at 3.38 p.m., for at that time the *Atlantis* flew over the German frontier, carrying a grateful man back to his home!

I did not steer directly to Berlin, but turned northwards at Dresden, and at 4.25 p.m. the Junkers aeroplane, D 1925 *Atlantis* flew over Dessau and the workshop where it first saw the light!

Now the course was set for Berlin. The capital of the Reich lay before me. I circled round the Tempelhof aerodrome. On Easter Monday, at 4.55 p.m., the *Atlantis* landed home. In six and a half days the



Bertram is soon in Europe



Arrival at Berlin



machine had flown 8,750 miles. In fourteen months it had flown a total distance of 35,000 miles.

The Press knew nothing about my return flight. I had been battling along towards home for six and a half days, and not a soul was the wiser! What did it matter to me that no preparations had been made for my return, that I should have no official reception, that no fine speeches would be made about me? I clambered out of the plane, and I felt like kissing the ground of my home. The home had a great and wonderful surprise for its returned wanderer too. Hans Bertram landed in a new and great Germany!

CHAPTER VIII

A CHAPTER FOR EXPERTS

FLIGHT REPORT OF THE BERTRAM-'ATLANTIS'-EXPEDITION 1932-33

- Aircraft Used..... Junkers W 35 - D 1925.
On the flight Germany, round Asia,
Australia: water-machine.
On the flight round Australia and back
to Germany: land-machine.
- Motor Junkers L 5, Compression 1:5.
- Air-Screw Junkers metal.
- Tyres Continental: Return Flight.
- Ignition and Light..... Bosch.
- Fuel Supply..... German-American Petroleum Com-
pany, Hamburg, with Stanavo aero-
plane petrol and Stanavo aeroplane
motor-oil: flight Germany, round Asia,
round Australia.
Shell and Wakefield: flight Australia
to Germany.
- Crew for Distance -
Germany to Java..... Chief Pilot: Bertram.
Second Pilot: Thom.
Aircraftman: Klausmann.
Camera-man: von Lagorio.
- Crew for Distance -
Java to Australia..... Pilot: Bertram.
Aircraftman: Klausmann.

Crew for Flight round

Australia Pilot: Bertram.
Companion: Australian aircraftman.

Crew for Distance -

Australia to Java .. Pilot: Bertram.
Companion: Allan.

Crew for Distance -

Java to Germany..... Pilot: Bertram.

Purpose of Flight..... 1. A visit to the German communities on the coasts of Asia and Australia, in co-operation with the Association for Germans in Foreign Countries.

2. A study of the air-transport companies existing in Asia and Australia.

3. A study of seaplane harbours and aerodromes in Asia and Australia.

4. Inquiry as to possible markets for Germany's aviation industry.

1932.

29.2. Start in Cologne at 12.40 p.m. with seaplane to Friedrichshafen. Start delayed through the ice which formed on the machine during its stay on the Rhine.

5.3. Friedrichshafen-Lugano. Detained in Friedrichshafen until 5.3 owing to bad weather-conditions over the Central Alps. On the way to Lugano through valley of old Rhine blind-flights through the clouds.

7.3. Lugano-Porto Fossone (Po-delta). Forced landing on account of snow-storm and motor trouble.

8.3. Flight to Venice.

10-11.3. Venice-Brindisi-Athens.

- 14-18.3. Athens—Castell Rosso—Alexandretta—Deir-ez-zorr and Baghdad. Severe sand-storm during flight over desert, but carburettor not stopped up.
- 23.3. Baghdad—Basra. Intermediate landing on the Euphrates in El-Khidr for film-photographs at the 'Warka' German excavation-sites.
- 24.3. Basra—Bushire.
- 25-26.3 Bushire—Djask—Gwadar—Karachi. In Karachi the machine was taken on shore and floats and wings cleaned and painted.
- 29.3. Karachi—Bombay.
- 31.3. Bombay—Mangalore.
- 2.4. Mangalore—Cochin—Colombo.
- 8.4. Colombo—Negombo—Pondicheri—Madras.
- 9.4. Madras—Cocanada. Machine slightly overloaded with heavy film-apparatus, motor with compression-ratio of 1:5 too weak for a start in the Tropics. From Cocanada the second pilot Thom had to proceed by rail or boat to Batavia with all the baggage in order to lighten the machine.
- 10.4. Cocanada—Calcutta.
- 15.4. Calcutta—Akyab. Severe monsoon gale in flight over Bay of Bengal and three thunder-storms.
- 16.4. Akyab—Rangoon.
- 22.4. Rangoon—Bangkok.
- 26.4. Bangkok—Victoria Point—Penang.
- 28.4. Penang—Singapore.
- 1.5. Singapore—Palembang.
- 2.5. Palembang—Batavia. In Batavia I decided to fly round Australia to visit German emigrants. I had received many telegrams inviting me to Australia; moreover, I believed that I should find a market for the products of Germany's aviation industry in Australia, New Zealand and New Guinea. To increase the radius of action of the machine, Thom

and Lagorio remained behind in Java. I intended to carry out the flight in long stages, taking with me the aircraftman Klausmann. On the return flight Thom and Lagorio were to join the expedition again to China.

- 7.5. Batavia-Soerabaja. In Soerabaja the machine was completely overhauled in the Dutch naval aerodrome Moro-Krembangan.
- 12.5. Soerabaja-Bima.
- 14.5. Bima-Kupang. I had intended to cross the Timor Sea in a night-flight from Kupang, as my German aircraft needed a vigorous newspaper propaganda on its arrival in Australia. Calm start from Kupang for flight to Port Darwin at midnight of the 14-15.5. Good weather reports received at 8 p.m. Moon set at 3.30 a.m. Twilight, 5 a.m. A cloudless, starry sky at departure, after half an hour's flight a heavy wall of cloud in the direction of the flight. I attempted to climb above it, got as far as 9,900 feet, but the wall of cloud was still higher, from 12.45 a.m. to 5.25 a.m. instrument-flight. In the instrument-flight I kept an exact course with the Askania long-distance compass. The machine was severely tossed about, from which I concluded that the gale was blowing at the rate of twenty-five to thirty miles an hour. It was impossible to ascertain the direction of the wind during the flight. Flying-altitude 600 feet, in order to discover the direction of the wind from the surface of the water at dawn and also to determine the drift during the night.

At 5.25 a.m. I recognised a south-easterly wind, its rate now one and a half to two miles. I calculated the drift and believed myself sixty to seventy miles north of my course line, for which reason I held fifteen degrees further south. Fuel for seven hours on board, distance Kupang-Port Darwin five hours.

6.42 a.m. sighted land in the south-east and landed at 6.58 a.m. in a sheltered creek. In spite of all sorts of attempts we could not find the way to the next town Wyndham. In the night-flight,

without knowing it, we had been driven 120 to 150 miles south. A strong northerly gale must have been blowing, whereas we had recognised a south wind in the morning from the surface of the water. At high water the aircraft was drawn up on to the twenty-yard long beach, with the motor turned to the sea, and well anchored. We took off a float hoisted a mast, and attempted to sail along the coast. The rudder was smashed by the heavy seas, and we drifted rudderless for five days. Finally, with improvised oars, we managed to bring the heavy boat back to the coast. It was heavy through two or three cwt. of sand which we had put in to prevent it capsizing. The float was smashed on the rocks. After forty days we were found. On the fifty-third day we returned to civilisation. Klausmann's health was so bad that he had to spend three months in Australian hospitals, and at last, in November 1932, I had to send him back to Germany accompanied by a German gentleman.

The salvage of the aircraft was extremely difficult. We had to reckon with the spring-tides in September, and I had therefore to take it away from the unprotected coast before then. It was impossible to find a suitable float in the short time either in Germany, China or Japan. A start with a wheel chassis was impossible because of the twenty-yard-long sandy beach, transport per ship likewise impossible, as ships anchor ten miles off the land on the north-west coast. Nor was it possible to tow the machine ten miles out into the open sea, because the seas were always heavy, and also there is only one ship a month passing this coast.

Finally I borrowed a float in Australia. It belonged to a sports-aircraft, but it had only half the displacement of the Junkers float, it was two yards shorter and its step forty-five cm. behind the step of the proper float. With an aircraftman placed at my disposal by the West Australian Airways I travelled back to the machine.

After some vain attempts I managed to start with the two unequal floats – the left wing was almost touching the surface of the water when at

rest – in the following way: I had to wait for a strong wind, turned on full gas with wind at the side, let the side wind lift the left wing and with it the port float out of the water, reduced the gas a trifle, and turned the machine on the starboard float into the wind. I was thus able to start on one float. For landing the process was reversed. I had to set the aircraft against the wind on the starboard float, accelerate again, turn the machine ninety degrees to starboard so as to let the side wind on the left keep the left wing and with it the port float up as long as possible. In the shortest possible distance the port float thus came in contact with the water, after a half-turn the machine stood still.

The forced landing on the north-west coast of Australia took place on the 15.5.32, the salvage on the 21.9.32, so the plane stood for almost four and a half months on the unprotected coast, at high-water – twice daily – in the sea. When I returned to the machine it was quite white. The salt water had been spraying it all the time, the water had evaporated and the salt remained on aircraft and motor. When the propeller had been twice turned the motor ran, without the sparking-plugs, magneto or carburettor having been opened or cleaned. There was no sign of corrosion.

On the 21.9.32 I flew with the two dissimilar floats to Broome and then to Perth, altogether 1,944 miles in the following stages:

- 22.9. Broome–Port Hedland.
- 23.9. Port Hedland–Onslow–Sharks Bay.
- 24.9. Sharks Bay–Perth. In Perth the plane was rebuilt as a land-machine. I did a propaganda flight in Australia with an Australian aircraftman. A total of 15,165 miles had been flown with the seaplane by the time we reached Perth.
- 29.9. Perth–Calgoorlie.
- 3.10. Calgoorlie–Adelaide. Record-flight 1,250 miles in nine hours ten minutes.
- 8.10. Adelaide–Melbourne.

- 17-19.10. Melbourne-Launceston-Hobart (Tasmania)-Melbourne.
- 20-27.10. Melbourne-Canberra-Sydney.
- 3-4.11. Sydney-Newcastle-Brisbane.
- 10-16.11. Brisbane-Newcastle-Sydney-Melbourne. Total distance so far flown: 20,678 miles.

In Melbourne preparations for a record-flight from Australia to England with the Australian second pilot Allan. The flight was thought of as a propaganda-flight in connection with the projected air-line between London and Australia. On board I had samples of all Australia's products. With this flight, which was to stimulate public interest in an air connection between Australia and England, I wished to show my gratitude to the Australian government for its hospitality to me.

- 9-10.12. Melbourne-Alice Springs-Port Darwin. 2,218 miles, with one intermediate landing, in twenty flying hours.

- 12.12. Port Darwin-Bima-Soerabaja-1,337 miles. At the night start from Soerabaja the machine crashed. Wrong starting directions had been received and the machine rolled from the dry take-off line to the end of the aerodrome where the rains had softened the ground. Starting-weight: 2,600 kg. Permissible weight: 2,700 kg. At the end of the flying-ground was a ditch two yards wide by two deep. I managed to keep the machine from capsizing by turning to the right shortly before the ditch and letting it slide over sideways. The under-carriage was damaged, and there were two holes in the right wing.

When Junkers had sent the necessary parts from Dessau, repairs were kindly effected by the Dutch naval flying base Moro-Krembangan, Soerabaja. The machine was ready on the 10.4.33.

1933.

- 11.4. Start from Soerabaja at 3 a.m. local time on solo flight to Berlin. The Pilot Allan had returned to

Australia, his leave having expired. The flight was performed in the following stages:

Soerabaja	Start.....	3.00 a.m.	
Batavia	Landing...	6.30	675 km.
	Start.....	7.30	
Alor Star	Landing...	4.50 p.m.	1,650 k.m.

12 hours 50 mins: 2,325 km.

First day.

Landing in Alor Star in rice-field. Cause: on the flying-maps of the Automobile Association, London, the situation of the aerodrome was given as four miles north-west of the town; in reality it lies seven miles north-east.

12.4.	Alor Star	Start.....	7.30 a.m.	
	Akyab	Landing...	6.45 p.m.	

10 hours 45 mins: 1,850 km.

Second day.

The late start was due to the landing in the rice-field, which did not permit of a start in the early morning hours.

13.4.	Akyab	Start.....	1.00 a.m.	
	Allahabad	Landing...	8.40 a.m.	1,300 km.
		Start.....	10.40 a.m.	
	Jodhpur	Landing...	3.55 p.m.	900 km.

12 hours 55 mins.: 2,200 km.

Third day.

A stay in Allahabad for repairs to a fairly large hole in right wing. The hole had been caused by an iron flagpole.

14.4.	Jodhpur	Start.....	1.30 a.m.	
	Karachi	Landing...	6.00 a.m.	675 km.
		Start.....	7.10 a.m.	
	Bushire	Landing...	7.10 p.m.	1,780 km.

16 hours 30 mins.: 2,455 km.

Fourth day.

15.4.	Bushire Aleppo	Start..... 1.10 a.m. Landing... 12.10 p.m.
		<hr/> 11 hours 00 mins.: 1,550 km. Fifth day.
16.4.	Aleppo Athens	Start..... 4.20 a.m. Landing... 12.10 p.m.
		<hr/> 7 hours 50 mins.: 1,290 km. Sixth day.
17.4.	Athens Berlin	Start..... 3.30 a.m. Landing... 4.55 p.m.
		<hr/> 13 hours 25 mins.: 2,100 km. Seventh day.

Total distance flown, in kilometres: 13,770.

Net flying-time: 85 hours 15 minutes.

Period of flight: 6 days 20 hours 15 minutes from Soerabaja to Berlin.

As regards the various stages I may say that on the first two flying days Soerabaja to Akyab there was a north-east monsoon with heavy showers at times; from Akyab to Karachi the weather was good; from Karachi to Berlin there was a very strong head-wind which rendered bigger stages impossible, as the flight had to be carried out without night-landings.

On arrival in Germany the Junkers W 33 D 1925 had, as water- and land-machine, covered a total distance of 55,330 km. in 321 hours 24 minutes, the Junkers motor had not been overhauled. The Bosch magneto was not removed, even after the four and a half months on the north-west coast of Australia. The Askania instruments – compass and velocity-gauge were functioning perfectly.

The entire fuel-supply of the German-American Petroleum Company, working in conjunction with its world-wide 'Standard' organisation, was excellent. In order to study the organisation of the two firms which exist side by side on this route, I used for the return flight Shell petrol and Wakefield oil. These firms possess a well worked-out service to the Far East.

Finally, I shall quote the professional opinion given by the Civil Aviation in Melbourne, Australia as to cylinder, motor, magneto and instruments. After the machine had been salved from the forced landing-place on the north-west coast of Australia, the Civil Aviation asked my permission to examine the aircraft. After the examination they stated that in their opinion the machine possessed the greatest advertisement-value of any aircraft known to them, for no sort of corrosion or any other damage had been found in cylinder, motor, magneto or instruments.

CHAPTER IX

A CHAPTER OF THANKS

BEFORE I come to the end I should like, in this chapter to express my thanks. I have much to be thankful for, and a great deal for which words are inadequate. Nor can I personally thank each person who assisted me. You understand that an expedition which was fourteen months on the way, and which covered a distance of about 35,000 miles, must have had support from all possible sides. To all anonymous friends who assisted me either financially or with goodwill I now say thank you.

In my book I have described the wonderful feeling at the moment of return to civilisation. Not only had I the indescribable joy of being restored to life, but the thousands of telegrams, letters and congratulations which we received gave me the glorious consciousness that all the world had been concerned with my companion Klausmann and myself during our fifty-three days on the north-west coast of Australia. Klausmann and I knew, in those long nights in the wilds of Australia, that the outer world was thinking about us. This in itself was a tremendous help to my mother in that cruel time. The Press spread the maddest, most sensational reports, almost everyone believed us dead; but my mother never despaired. She sought Divine aid, and she had likewise the comfort of sympathy from every quarter. So I venture to thank the reader on behalf of my mother, my companion and myself.

From the great number of firms which backed me financially or morally, I should like to single out the Norddeutsche Lloyd of Bremen and the Homburg-America Line of Hamburg. One of the first telegrams which I received on my return to civilisation was an offer from the Norddeutsche Lloyd to give Klausmann and myself a free passage home by the most direct route, and also to ship the aircraft home free of charge. I accepted this very kind offer only on Klausmann's behalf. Klausmann had to be sent to a German hospital for nerve-treatment. For my own part I persisted in returning by air with my *Atlantis*. The Norddeutsche Lloyd and the Hamburg-America Line rendered me all manner of assistance in my flights with the water-machine round Asia; they facilitated to an extraordinary degree the work of the expedition in the different unknown harbours. I wish to express my sincerest gratitude to both these great international firms.

It seems superfluous to talk of acknowledgment or thanks to the maker of my faithful *Atlantis*. For fourteen months the Junkers aircraft D 1925 was my home; my plans for the future, my wishes and my thoughts were all united in this aircraft; it never left me in the lurch; it carried me and my crew safely through all kinds of weather; it gave Klausmann and me water to drink when we were parched with thirst in the wilderness. Finally my *Atlantis* brought me safely home again. To the firm of Junkers, and more especially to the founder of the firm, Professor Hugo Junkers, I express my grateful thanks, if love for my aircraft and gratitude towards it can be expressed in words.

I have also to thank the firms of Bosch and Askania for equipping the *Atlantis* with excellent magnetos and instruments. Over a distance of 35,000 miles I was dependent on the excellence of these German products

— if anything had gone wrong with magneto or instruments I could not have made my way home.

In conclusion, it gives me great pleasure to say a few words of gratitude to a firm which never left me in the lurch — at the moment of success or, what was more important — at the moment of my most desperate distress when my expedition came to a sad end through shipwreck.

There are three things for which I can find no words of thanks: it is impossible for me to thank my fatherland — my home. The word home kept me from despair in the Australian Bush and later under the heavy blows of fate — home for the young man out there was the shining ideal and the goal of all labour. Further I can never sufficiently thank the continent of Australia, and every inhabitant there from the Prime Minister to the humblest, naked savage. And the whole world will understand that Klausmann and Bertram can say no word of thanks to the Power which protected them from madness and death, and brought them back to life. Only in silent prayer can the two men thank their God.

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